

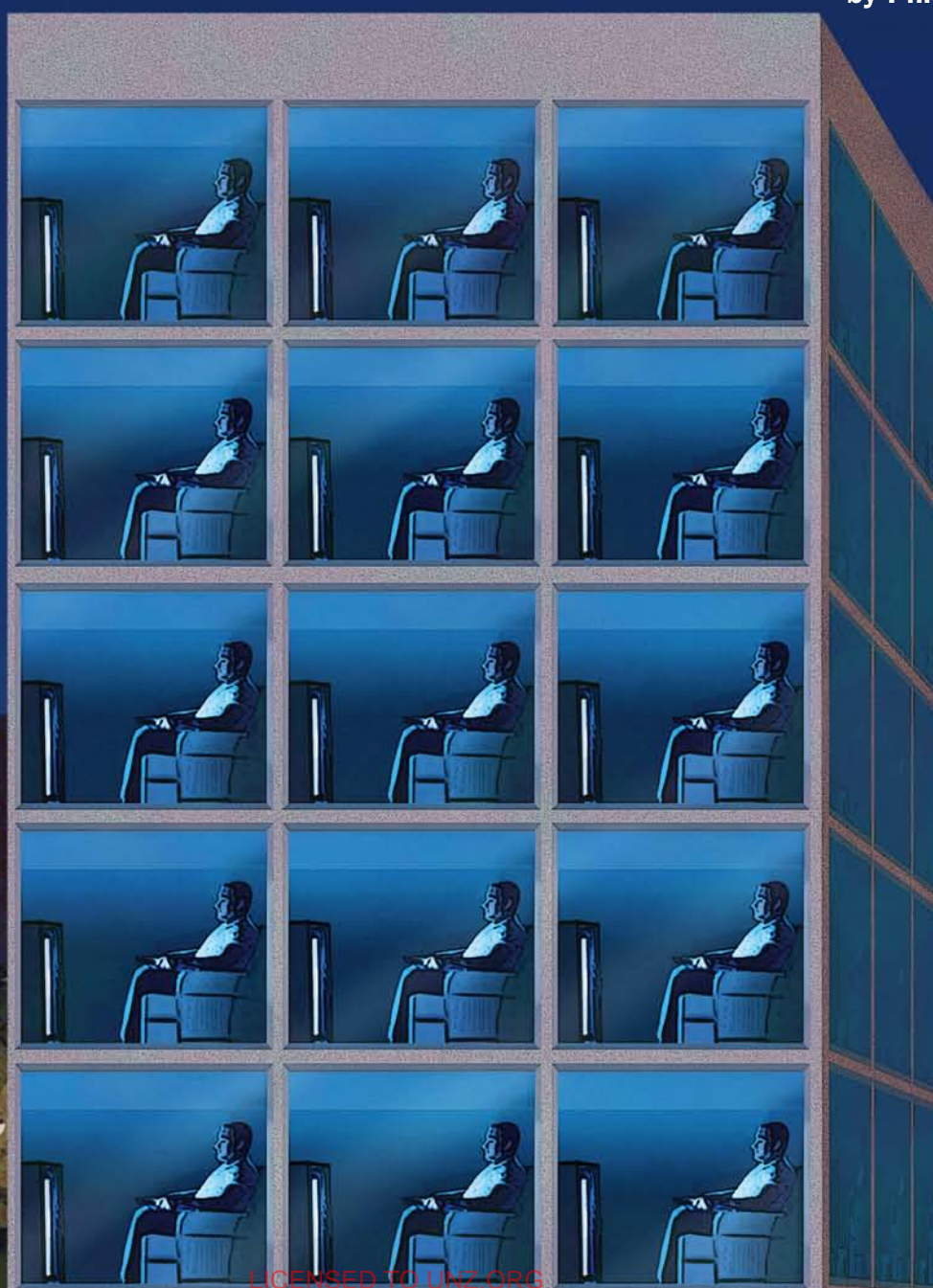
JUNE 2010

The American Conservative

Shattered Society

How Wall Street & Washington Broke Up America

by Phillip Blond



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TEMPEST IN A TEA PARTY

I just read your hit piece “Tea Party Crashers” (April 2010). I wonder just who the f--- you are because you don’t sound anything like the conservatives that I have been associated with. Ronald Reagan would wonder if you might have Democrat Party credentials.

If you can’t figure out what the Tea Party movement is all about, then YOU ARE PART OF THE PROBLEM. This is a gathering of true Americans who love this country, love the Constitution and the liberty that only America can provide. We saw that we did not have representation in either of the two political parties and did not like the rampant socialism that Obama and the über-Left have ushered in.

Have you joined the Main—pardon me—Lame Stream Media? Are you to the point that you cannot recognize the values represented by the Tea Party movement as True American Values? Liberals tried to stomp us out by calling us “radicals,” “mobsters,” “racists,” and “hate mongers.” Now we are getting it from the supposed conservative side? Stop drinking the Kool-Aid and really take a look at the Tea Party movement. You might learn something!

JOHN KIRKPATRICK

Ellsinore, Mo.

TAFT TRADITION

I was struck by your selection of Sen. Robert Taft for May’s *Old & Right*. Taft’s words ring just as true today and strike at the very heart of the interventionist foreign policy that still has us acting as the world’s policeman and social worker. What a tragedy it is that we did not heed these warnings.

It’s been nearly six decades since Senator Taft wrote *A Foreign Policy for Americans*, and American imperialism has expanded to an extent that those of his time could not have imagined. The

image of America as universal defender of freedom and hope—present in many people’s minds since FDR’s “arsenal of democracy”—has tragically survived long enough for Ron Paul to still be calling for its demise.

NATHAN GROOMS

Nashville, Tenn.

SMOKING THE PEACE PIPE

With regard to your symposium, “Left & Right: Prospects for Peace” (May 2010), it’s not only possible but necessary for principled liberals and conservatives to come together.

Righties, it might be argued, reject new thoughts, while Lefties dote on them excessively. That’s not true, of course. Most conservative ideas are not as hoary as often supposed, and many Lefties continue to hold onto variations of Marxist orthodoxy almost a century and a half after Marx’s death. But to the extent that Righties want to keep what is good in society and Lefties want to change what is bad, are they inherently incompatible?

We need each other. We correct each other. Is this really so hard to see? The Right emphasizes individuality, the Left emphasizes community. The Right emphasizes property, the Left emphasizes commons. The Right emphasizes freedom, the Left emphasizes empathy. The Right emphasizes security, the Left emphasizes peace. These principles are not only compatible, but they complement each other.

For our putative Left/Right movement to succeed, we need to inspire, and to inspire, we have to develop ideas that transcend the limitations we have become used to. We are drowning in activists and pundits. What we need are theorists, who can spell out the deeper roots of our principles, which we have forgotten, and illuminate the broader vistas, which we are unable to see. There is a lot of work to be done, but if

we do it together, change might happen faster than we think.

Let us begin with long and patient discussions about basic things, such as what is property, what is law, what is the free market, what is the role of government, what is the interplay between the individual and community? And let’s not start off by ruling out certain words, such as “anti-imperialism” or “liberty.” Let’s not assume that everyone is either a Nazi or a Bolshevik. Let’s not dismiss Karl Marx or Edmund Burke.

And if we do our work really well, we might be able to write a list of demands that we can nail to the oaken doors of some high and mighty government building somewhere!

PAUL KANE

Via e-mail

EU BETCHA!

Professor Layne’s analysis is very good and essentially right (“Graceful Decline,” May 2010). But to some extent, he falls into the trap he himself is criticizing. The words not spoken: European Union! American thinkers have no problem accepting that China is becoming a world power, that the Russian democracy might return to a position similar to that of the old Soviet Union, that Brazil and India might rise. But they are in total denial as regards the EU, and there seems to be no rational reason for it.

It may be a sort of “prodigal son” thing: Europe’s colonial rejects determined to outshine the “old country” and appalled at the idea that the reverse might happen. Who can tell? But the phenomenon is there.

KENNY MICHAEL

Via e-mail

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MILLIONS OF McVEIGHS?

Introducing a documentary marking the anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing, Rachel Maddow noted, "Nine years after his execution, we are left worrying that Timothy McVeigh's voice from the grave echoes in a new rising tide of American anti-government extremism." The ominous subtext: tea today, bombs tomorrow.

It is true that Americans are increasingly frustrated with Washington. According to a new Pew poll, just 22 percent trust the government "almost always" or "most of the time." But Tea Parties protesting tax policy aren't elaborate cover for a plot to blow up federal buildings. The movement is noisy and messy—and better suited to sell bumper stickers than upend the system. A militia it is not.

When their own crowds assemble—a confused spectacle of coat hangers, rainbows, and "Free Mumia" signs—liberals enthuse about democratic health. But when conservatives gather, an angry social pathology is sweeping the land. The Southern Poverty Law Center cites dramatic growth in "anti-government patriot groups and their militia organizations"—up to 512 from 149 in 2008. How they count is unclear since it's doubtful some underground outfit in Montana feels obligated to register with the SPLC. More likely, the hate police have been inflating their definition to include anyone vaguely familiar with the Second Amendment. By their lights, even mild-mannered Ron Paul "helps validate and stoke fears."

Some liberals may be too dim to distinguish between patriots and terrorists. Lance Baxter, who voices GEICO advertisements, recently left a message for FreedomWorks, Dick Arney's wonkish Beltway operation, asking, "what your plans are for when one of your members actually kills somebody." But most of

those who lump all conservatives into the extremist camp are engaged in a lazy, if effective, propaganda play. Casting the Right as a crowd of McVeighs makes it too evil or mad to engage in debate.

[POLITICS]

THE REVOLUTION WILL BE TELEVISED

Poor David Cameron. The Conservative Party leader seemed set to become Britain's next prime minister—and that may still happen. But at this writing, the UK elections scheduled for May 6 have been thrown into a whirl by surging support for a third party. The Liberal Democrats, also-rans for the last 20 years, now poll within striking distance of second place. If they sap enough votes from the Tories, no party will have a majority in the next Parliament, and Gordon Brown might survive as prime minister.

What has propelled the Lib Dems to nearly equal footing with Labour and the Tories is the charismatic performance of their leader, Nick Clegg, in the April 15 televised debate. Britain has long been as sick of Labour and Tories as Americans are of Republicans and Democrats. But there as here, few voters know anything about the alternatives. Until Clegg appeared in prime time, that is.

Ron Paul would not be surprised—he catapulted to the top tier of Republican

presidential contenders in 2007 on the strength of his appearances in debates with Rudy Giuliani, John McCain, and the rest of the GOP pack. Pat Buchanan, Ralph Nader, and Ross Perot can also attest to the power of national debates to make or break a third-party effort. Clegg illustrates a key contention: if viewers are exposed to dissent from the two-party line, they will flock to an alternative.

The Lib Dems already have 63 seats in the House of Commons, making them more successful than any U.S. third party. And Clegg's moment in the spotlight may fail to translate into dramatic gains for his party. But he will play PM-maker in a hung Parliament, and his reward for saving Brown could be electoral reform that would impose the "alternative vote" on Britain. That would let voters indicate a second choice, and as most Labour supporters would opt for Lib Dems as their next best option and vice versa, that could doom the Tories.

Don't expect the Commission on Presidential Debates to extend invitations to Libertarians or Greens anytime soon. And the chances of electoral reform coming before Congress are assuredly nil. But Republicans would do well to take heed. The only way for an establishment party to keep insurgents forever at bay is to cease being an establishment party. With Ron Paul polling



close to Obama among likely voters and neck-and-neck with Sarah Palin among Tea Partiers, the GOP might just experience a revolution from within.

[ELECTION]

WHO'S RIGHT?

The battle for the future of the Republican Party is being fought in Kentucky, where two distinctly different philosophies are struggling for the GOP's Senate nomination. On one side, Secretary of State Trey Grayson, favored by Senate Majority Leader (and Kentucky senator) Mitch McConnell and endorsed by Dick Cheney and Rudy Giuliani. On the other, ophthalmologist and anti-tax activist Rand Paul, the candidate of the Tea Parties who has Sarah Palin's endorsement. It's a fight between the party elite and the populist grassroots, and it has deep significance.

After 9/11, liberal Republicans like Giuliani saw a chance to redefine themselves as national-security conservatives. Grayson himself is a former Democrat who voted for Bill Clinton in 1992. In his endorsement, Cheney said, "it is clear to me that Trey Grayson is right on the issues that matter—both on fiscal responsibility and on national security," but it's no secret where the former VP's interest lies. Dating to his days in the Ford administration, Cheney has always put concentrating power in the executive branch and a bellicose foreign policy first on his agenda.

Paul, by contrast, has been hailed by Sen. Jim DeMint as one of the few Senate candidates nationwide serious about "real budget reform." Those who put the GOP's philosophy of limited government first are pulling for Paul, who speaks to traditional concerns about reining in Washington. For decades, Republicans have been divided between presidential imperialists, small-government conservatives, and country-club liberals. Now the Rockefellers and

Cheney's faction have merged, but they face unexpected opposition from the new grassroots revolt against bipartisan big government. The outcome of this primary will tell us much about what's in store for the GOP—and the country.

[ECONOMY]

GOLDMAN STANDARD

There is no indication that a half-term senator from Illinois knows any more about overhauling American finance than running our car industry or health-care system. That doesn't mean Barack Obama won't try—with a little help from his friends.

Goldman Sachs contributed \$994,795 to his presidential campaign, making it the largest corporate donor. No wonder the nation's biggest investment bank feels comfortable assuring shareholders in its annual report that the administration's "reform" plan will boost its bottom line.

McClatchy reports that while the SEC has been negotiating with Goldman Sachs lawyers over fraud charges, the firm's CEO has made four trips to Pennsylvania Avenue. In a cozy twist, former White House counsel Greg Craig is arguing Goldman's case.

As we go to press, Congress is still puzzling over what to wrap in red tape. But the problem is less a shortage of regulation than a thicket so dense that whole careers can be made navigating it. For every new rule Congress writes, Wall Street will hire more experts to outplay the enforcers.

And for all the presidential scolding about an "ethic of greed" and a "failure of responsibility," Obama knows as well as the banks do that these vaunted reforms are but a farce. The barons will accept a ceremonial slap on the wrist then get back to work, secure in the knowledge that American taxpayers will continue to underwrite their risky business. ■

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[still bowling alone]

Shattered Society

Liberalism, Right and Left, has made lonely serfs of us all.
Does the Red Tory tradition offer a remedy?

By Phillip Blond

In February 2009, British philosopher Phillip Blond's essay "Rise of the Red Tories," published in London's Prospect magazine, sparked a transatlantic discussion about the failure of politics, both Left and Right, to address our most pressing social problems. "We are a bipolar nation," he wrote, "a bureaucratic, centralized state that presides dysfunctionally over an increasingly fragmented, disempowered, and isolated citizenry."

Each side has had its revolution. Liberals' cultural coup overthrew traditional mores and installed government as the fount from which all blessings flow. Conservatives swore allegiance to the market, enthroning capitalism as arbiter of ultimate worth. In so doing, both enslaved the individual to forces beyond his reach and leveled the intermediate institutions that once grounded and valued him.

Blond's call for a new dynamic civic movement based around association has become a book, Red Tory, just released in Britain. He explains, "Red because it caters to the needs of the disadvantaged and believes in economic justice; Tory because it believes in virtue, tradition, and the priority of the good."

During Blond's recent American speaking tour, New York Times

columnist David Brooks observed that in this country, rising contempt for the political class has taken a more libertarian expression, most recently in the Tea Party movement, but allowed that civic association might be more effective in restoring public trust.

Here we offer a taste of Red Toryism, along with a discussion of whether these ideas could gain traction in the U.S.—or whether they even should.

WE LIVE IN A SOCIETY of decreasing circles. More and more of us know fewer and fewer of us. We live alone and eat by ourselves, often with a TV or computer rather than a human being for company. If we do marry, the time an average relationship lasts decreases with each passing year.

In the Anglo-Saxon world, we abandon our old and increasingly care badly for our young. Our grandparents can recall a vivid life in which aunts and uncles, nephews and nieces wove together the social fabric of a stable, mutual society. Nearly half of all children are born out of wedlock. Many grow up without a father, some without any loving parent at all. The young people emerging from this background, denied any real education in public and private virtues, are easily seduced by glamorous dreams that promise con-

sumption they cannot afford. Untouched by ideals of love and fidelity, they operate free of commitment, discipline, and responsibility. These unreformed teenage idioms become adult habits and ruin lives by creating people unable to bond or relate.

For men, especially those at the bottom of the social scale who are increasingly losing out in education and career advancement, an emasculated life at the margins of society awaits. For successful young women, having a degree is fast becoming an indicator of a childless future. No one would choose this outcome nor wish it upon anyone else, not least because it drains the energy from domestic life and compounds the terrifying fate of getting old alone. Everywhere we look, the ties that bind are loosening, and the foundations of a secure and joyful existence are being undermined.

What is the origin of this degradation? Looking back over the past 30 years, we could blame longer working hours that families must put in, a situation itself compounded by the financial necessity that in most households both adults must work, higher levels of personal debt, job insecurity, distrust of institutions, and fear of each other. Our society has become like a ladder whose rungs are growing further and further apart so

it is increasingly difficult to ascend. Those at the top have accelerated away from the rest of us by practicing a self-serving and state-sanctioned capitalism that knows no morals and exists only to finance its own excess. Those in the middle are being crushed by bureaucracy and the effort of squaring stagnating wages with higher demands. Those at the bottom are more isolated and despised than ever before.

But decisive as these factors are, they do not add up to the social disaster that we are living through and that many, perversely, increasingly regard as normal. A healthier society could have resisted these trends. A society that still had strong families could have ensured a lifestyle that secured rather than undermined the economic base of the household. A society that still had neighbors who knew one another could have created trusting communities, and they could have produced institutions that served the needs of people rather than the bureaucratic demands of a distant and hostile state.

But through the privileging of alternative lifestyles, the prioritizing of minority politics, and the capture of markets by monopolies, we have destroyed the sustained and sustaining society. Little wonder that in a world in which binding norms, civil behavior, and notions of the common good have ceased to exist, frightened, isolated individuals call upon an increasingly authoritarian state to impose the order that we can no longer create for ourselves.

The loss of our culture is best understood as the disappearance of civil society. Only two powers remain: the state and the market. We no longer have, in any effective independent way, local government, churches, trade unions, cooperative societies, or civic organizations that operate on the basis of more than single issues. In the past, these institutions were a means for ordinary

people to exercise power. Now mutual communities have been replaced with passive, fragmented individuals. Civil spaces have either vanished or become subject-domains of the dictatorial state or the monopolized market.

Neither Left nor Right can offer an answer because both ideologies have collapsed as both have become the same. Those who construe the libertarian individual as the center of current rightist thought actually draw upon an extreme Left conception that finds its original expression in Rousseau, who held that society was primordial imprisonment. It was Rousseau whose social theory forced the diversity of the world to conform to the general will—which was but this same individualism writ large—thereby sponsoring the rationalist and secular red terror of the French Revolution. In fact, any anarchic construal of the self requires for its social realization an authoritarian statism to control the forces that are unleashed. Collectivism and individualism are but two sides of the same devalued and degraded currency. And this has been the history of recent modernity—an oscillation between the state and the individual that gradually erodes civil association, which is in reality the only check on the extremes of either.

The 1960s New Left, to counter the authoritarian state it created, built a personal zone free of control in which to repudiate all standards and sell the poisonous idea of liberation through chemical and sexual experimentation. But when these New Left individualists preached personal pleasure as a means of public salvation, they were not resisting state control. They were, through their demands for freedom without limit and life without responsibility, undermining all autonomous self-governing structures, leaving a dreadful legacy of anarchic individualism that required

state authoritarianism as the only way to re-impose order and society. Contemporary libertarian individualism and statist collectivism created each other and are locked in a fatal embrace that destroys the civic middle and the life and economy of the associative citizen.

This whole scenario dawned on me when I realized that my left-wing friends didn't really believe in community. They only believed in choice. They supported abortion because they found it validating, a demonstration of real personal autonomy. But they think that fox hunting is terribly cruel and so should be ardently opposed. No doubt the same dispensation finds similar expression in the United States.

The Left harbors a deep and abiding hatred of fixity and tradition, a loathing of anything settled. In Anthony Giddens's *Third Way*—the book that was behind the Blair revolution in Britain—he talks about how a new cosmopolitanism will free people from nature, and one gets the sense that Cool Britannia so envisaged is the permanent destruction of taboo and tie. According to the Blairite radicals we have to constantly rewrite ourselves by a willful assertion that wipes the slate clean and lets us begin again through the permanent act of choice—as long as such volition shows no teleology or direction. Nobody is told what to choose because the moral act in our contemporary paradigm isn't what is chosen, it's the act of choosing itself. Indeed, to choose is to repristinate and repeat the idea of oneself as an isolated, atomistic agent.

The contemporary Right all too often believes exactly the same thing, but expresses it through economics. The dominant actor for right-wing theory is the self-interested individual. The invisible hand is meant to mediate goods and allocate resources according to the price system and the efficient market cycle. But that “free” market produced a

massive centralization in capital, and it fed an asset bubble whose expansion and disastrous contraction has been underwritten by the state.

What has been exposed is the shared agenda of cultural libertarianism on the Left and economic libertarianism on the Right. There really was no difference between them because both were upholding the same perverted liberal ideology.

The breaking of that ideology began in the United Kingdom when David Cameron was elected as Conservative leader and began using the phrase “broken Britain” to refer to the dislocation that was happening in our society. Suddenly conservatives were talking about social justice, and it wasn’t the failed form of “compassionate conservatism.” It was a revival of an original One Nation Toryism that was acutely concerned with the interests of the bottom half of the population.

This was violently attacked by the Left. Liberal journalists were caught in a bind: “This is nonsense. The lives of the poor are fine. Oh no, we can’t say that: we’re left-wing. Well, it’s not broken, it’s just different. If people want to have seven partners in one week and to take drugs in front of their children, that’s their choice. But wait, that can’t be right. We just won’t talk about it then.” The Left was completely wrong-footed, and conservatism, which had been out of power for three elections and could easily have been out for another, rose to the top of the polls by adopting the mantle of social justice.

This was not wholly unique. During the 19th century, the Tories were far more radical and more inclined toward the cause of the poor than were the liberal Whigs. It was the conservatives who largely led the campaign against slavery, who argued that the conditions of the white working class in the mills were analogous to those of black slaves, and

who pushed for reduced working hours. It was the Tories who through the factory acts opposed the Whigs forcing women and children to work 16 hours a day.

Conservatives need to look back to William Cobbett, Thomas Carlyle, and John Ruskin, who were critics of authoritarian statism as well as denouncers of self-serving capitalism. As conservatives, they hated the cultural consequences of industrialization—the creation of a landless, dispossessed mass forced to work at subsistence levels, cut off from any cultural enrichment. Then came Hilaire Belloc’s 1912 tour de force, *The Servile State*, in which he denounced both capitalism and socialism for instituting master-slave relations. The capitalist monopolizes land, ownership, and capital, forcing the formerly self-sufficient to work for subsistence wages. The socialist dispossesses in the name of general ownership and communal monopoly. For the worker, both have the same result.

Because this new conservatism echoes a nobler and more radical past, it has great resonance. But it is still allied with the idea of the old neoliberal model of markets. Conservatives can care for social justice, but they still have to support the political economy that had done great damage to the bottom half of society. In 1976, the bottom 50 percent of the British population had 12 percent of the wealth (excluding property). By 2003, that percentage had fallen to 1 percent. So much for the idea that assets and equity will through market mechanisms evenly distribute themselves. A recent UK government survey showed that asset inequality between the 90th percentile and the bottom tenth was 100 to 1—a massive capture of assets by those at the top of the tree.

Now I view myself a pro-market thinker who advocates a popular capitalism and is persuaded by what the

utopic thought on the Right wanted: a market economy of widely disbursed property, of multiple centers of innovation, of the decentralization of capital, wealth, and power. But neoliberalism has delivered none of these things. It has instead produced centralization; reduction in plurality; the driving upward, not the driving downward, of opportunity, leverage, and innovation. It has reinscribed the very things it purported to end.

A vast body of citizens has been stripped of its culture by the Left and its capital by the Right, and in such nakedness they enter the trading floor of life with only their labor to sell. These individuals created by the market-state settlement cannot form a genuine society, for they lack the social capital to create such an association or the economic basis to sustain it. All neoliberalism has done is change class to caste and cut people off from the means whereby self-improvement can result in a genuine change in circumstance.

But most people don’t know what has unhinged their lives, what has driven them and us apart from each other. We don’t know why the ideology we spout and the language that we claim as our own has delivered a situation radically different from what they purport. Liberalism has linked Left and Right into the most illiberal political formation we have yet crafted. I attack it in my book from the point of view of liberty itself:

I am in part appalled by the legacy of modern liberalism precisely because I take myself to be a true liberal. I believe in a free society, where human beings, under the protection of law and guidance of virtue, pursue their own account of the good in debate with those who differ from them and in concord with those who agree. Since in this

life we cannot know all that can be known and all human knowledge is conditioned by our own lives and the culture in which we are immersed, we can never transcend this condition and know directly and completely the ultimate principle of everything that exists...

But it does not follow that there is nothing to be known. Unfortunately, all too many British students, who have suffered the misfortune of ten weeks of bad French philosophy, or empiricistic analytic philosophy of a more homegrown kind, emerge from university with the deep and abiding conviction that there is no such thing as objective truth and that everything cultural is arbitrary. They carry into their twenties and beyond the view that any claim about truth is hierarchical and therefore synonymous with fascism and all manner of evil and conservative consequences. Happily convinced by the radical import of this message, too many of our talented young people give up on the possibility of transformative politics and assiduously work their way into the managerial and governing class of our country. Once there, with self-interest duly satisfied, they repeat and institutionalize the same compliant liberal nostrums, which ironically translate into increasingly centralized and bureaucratic procedures that exclude the poor and those who have not been so well-positioned or so well-advantaged to work the system. While the idea of a universal relativism doesn't survive the first brush with serious rational reflection, such juvenile dictums have permeated our governing elite and undermined the foundations of all our great institutions...

If we are just empty, atomized individuals whose only mode of progress is whim and personal inclination, then no common bond can exist between us, because bonds limit will and subject us to something other than ourselves. For the liberal, there is no more profound violation than that. Moreover, a self-interested individual needs the state to police relationships with other individuals. Ergo, extreme individualism leads to extreme collectivization—and back again.

This defines our political life. The Left loves collectivization: the state is a moral proxy for anything I do; the state protects my rights so my little individualisms can subsist and my cultural liberalism can then be defended by the Supreme Court. Meanwhile, the Right enforces an economic system that supports exactly that vision.

AN ECONOMY NOT WEDDED TO A SINGLE MARKET MODEL SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE WINDS OF GLOBAL FINANCE COULD SPREAD WEALTH THROUGHOUT THE SECTORS, CREATING A RESILIENT AND PLURAL ECONOMY.

Those dominant oscillations in the West—between the extreme liberalism of the Right and the extreme collectivization of the Left—are one in the same and subtend from the same origin: from a violent, secular liberalism that broke with the antique model of liberty and has essentially destroyed both the Left and the Right.

I want to suggest three ways to move forward: economic, political, and social.

First, we must acknowledge that the whole of our free-market economy has been captured by the Chicago School. Because we're only focused within competition law on price utility as the interpreter of what would be a good outcome, the bigger your company, the cheaper you can deliver goods. So we pursue monopoly in the name of freedom and

asset capture in the name of wealth extension. What we have produced as a result, from the Right, is a whole ideology of competition but no competitors. We've created a condition in which large businesses dominate—via a rigged market of rent-seeking capital—in an economy that cuts off for the majority the path to mobility and prosperity.

What do you do for people who aren't that clever, or that well positioned, or that rich, but who are hard-working? Well, it's permanently low wages for you—and for your children, and your children's children. You say you would like to open a store or a business, to have some financial autonomy? Well, we can't have that. The truth is, we can't create a situation in which you could prosper because you can't compete—you can't bully suppliers, you can't cross subsidize, you can't access

the supply chains that are already controlled by the new monopolies, so you can't capture the price utility that those big concerns can. (No matter that the corporate model is subsidized by various tax breaks.) Consequently, there is no route out for many of those in the bottom half of the population.

Until we can change that economic structure, we cannot break the law. So staying within the private sector, we need to adopt an older liberal model and broaden it with a Catholic, distributist, or even Austrian account of the notion of various plural senses to give human beings a chance at a stake in the world. An economy not wedded to a single market model susceptible to the winds of global finance could spread wealth throughout the sectors, creating a

resilient and plural economy capable of self-sustaining in the face of the collapse of one segment.

I believe in the free market, but we haven't had a free market. In a brilliant paper, the head of monetary stability at the Bank of England, Andrew Haldane, recently asked why the speculative economy has done so well. Because the state has taken all the risks. Capital will always seek the highest return, and if you look at the rise of the state and the way it has legislated the banking sector, it has essentially (through deposit, capital, and liquidity insurance) taken on the risk of investment banking activity. Investment bankers can take any risk and not pay

co-ops. Let's have worker buy-outs instead of multi-leveraged management buyouts that game both stakeholders and workers. Let them de-layer and de-managerialize their own professions, and let them have a stake and deliver the service they've always wanted.

In terms of public assistance, I argue for a power of budgetary capture. Millions of welfare dollars are spent, yet all that ever does is make recipients passive. Ordinary people, recipients of public largesse, can't in any way create the associations and culture that can be part of their own renewal. So why not allow citizens' groups to take over government budgets and run them for themselves?

many vested interests. But if, like budgetary capture, we had a democratic capture, we could send democracy back to the streets. If we could ally that political economy with actual democracy, we could really have bottom-up associations and render the central state increasingly superfluous.

This sort of subsidiarity isn't a fetishization of the small. It's a belief in the most appropriate, and that can even be large transnational corporations. I don't, for example, believe in a localized nuclear industry. In addition, there will always be a role for the state as a kind of ultimate guild or virtue culture that can step in when things go wrong. In that view, it's not Robert Nozick's night-watchman state nor is it the centralized state of the Fabian socialists. The state becomes a facilitator of the sort of outcome it wants, but it has to be agnostic as to how people realize that outcome. And only if the outcome isn't being realized—for instance, if poor people aren't being educated—should it step in.

Finally, the real recovery has to come in civil society itself. Society should be what rules, what regulates, what is sovereign. Both the state and the market must be subservient to renewed civil association. This requires a restoration of social conservatism that recognizes the claim of the common good over the free agency of the individual. Rather than being a reactionary force that makes war on minorities or vilifies one-parent families, it should, for example, promote the understanding of the family as a feminist institution that because of its reciprocity and mutuality liberates both men and women to pursue the ends that most of them want, which is human flourishing, probably involving children. It should also reach beyond the family to restore the social square. Placing people in relational matrices recreates for those who don't have a

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SOCIETY SHOULD BE WHAT RULES, WHAT REGULATES, WHAT IS SOVEREIGN. BOTH THE STATE AND THE MARKET MUST BE SUBSERVIENT TO RENEWED CIVIL ASSOCIATION.

any price. Because of this, all capital is centralized. Why would you go to Wisconsin to open a smelting plant when you can get a much safer and higher return in Wall Street or the City of London because you are engaging in the highest return activity at a risk premium covered by the taxpayer? The most you can lose in high finance is your original stake, and sometimes not even that, as there seems no limit to what the state will do for finance capital. If you add up all the debt in the UK—personal, state, and corporate—it comes to 468 percent of GDP. This could mean 10 to 20 years of de-leveraging—a generational economic contraction. There's nothing free about that.

Along with the private sector being captured by big capital, the public sector has been captured by the big state. The public sector should be broken up—not privatized out, so that big-money interests could essentially gain the difference between the wages of those in the public sector and the wages they were prepared to pay, but turned into employee-owned

Imagine women bonding together because they don't want to see their children fall into crime and degradation. In giving these people power over their own communities with the public money that has been subsidizing rather than transforming their lives, we will be giving the poor capital. And if they can gain access to the market, they might really create the free economy that everyone has been claiming but no one has been delivering. Then we'll have a situation in which the state won't regulate the small and the intermediate out of existence, a situation in which people can genuinely compete.

In the political realm, we have to admit that democracy doesn't work particularly well, mainly because it's hugely centralized and substantially captured by vested interests. We need to turn it upside-down—a doctrine of radical democratic subsidiarity that would allow local associations both to select and vote for their own candidates. We can't do that in the current political settlement. It's too locked; there are too

Better Red

When public whim overtakes established order, authority turns arbitrary.

By Daniel McCarthy

EVERYONE'S WORST FEARS for America are coming true. The traditional Left sees increasing inequality and falling real wages for workers. The libertarian Right grows alarmed at the federal government's ever heavier hand in the economy—from bailouts to healthcare reform—and the steady erosion of civil liberties before the flood tide of the national-security state. Cultural conservatives, meanwhile, lament a toxic environment of competitive sex and recreational violence. Americans still enjoy freedom of a sort, but not old-fashioned economic or political liberty, only the chimeras of lifestyle choice.

You can sleep with whomever you want, but there will be no legally binding commitments, and whether you keep your house or your children will be up to a judge. You can quit your job at any time, but good luck finding another. You can vote for the Republican or Democrat of your preference, and they will both give the country bigger government and more wars. Even which church to attend is a consumer choice, as self-interested and trivialized as which soft drink to buy. For all the fetishization of choice, Americans are taught by their institutions that there is only one way to live: casually, unconcernedly, without strong connections to anything but the provider state and its flag.

This is not the world that conservatives or progressives, or for that matter libertarians, wanted to make, but all deserve a share of the blame. The welfare state has deprived millions of Americans of the will, as well as the ability, to manage their own lives. Indiscriminate application of a free-market ethos to

other spheres of life has reduced attachments to whims, atomizing society. And for all their hand-wringing about culture, conservatives have not applied themselves to creating art or literature, but have spent their energies glorifying militarism and shivering in fear of leftist and Islamofascist phantoms. They locate the ills of society not in the state or the oligopolized market, but in bad people—Commies, terrorists, McGovernites—who can be bombed, jailed, or tortured away.

A different kind of economy, politics, and society can be imagined, one characterized by smaller government, more widely dispersed property, and an interesting local life not defined by big bangs delivered from a glowing screen. Progressives like Christopher Lasch have tried to describe such an alternative. So have left-libertarians like Karl Hess—they are Left not because they are “libertines,” as the canard goes, but because they look critically at concentrations of power. And so, too, have traditional conservatives—and now Red Tories like Phillip Blond.

Red Toryism is not an easy sell in the United States. “Tory” was what our forefathers labeled the British loyalists they ran out of the country. All good Americans, from the radical Tom Paine to the conservative John Dickinson, were Whigs. As for “Red”—not too long ago we thought we would be better off dead. Prefixed to “state,” it might be acceptable. Otherwise it conjures to the right-minded citizen images of European or Canadian social democracy: the EUSSR or Soviet Canuckistan. God-fearing

Americans love the free market, and we have the freest in the world. That's what makes us exceptional.

Or so Fox News and Rush Limbaugh would like you to think. In fact, the word “conservative” was once as unpopular as anything red or Tory, and the first brave souls who openly called themselves conservatives after the Second World War had visions of society very much like Blond's. Peter Viereck, whose *Conservatism Revisited* in 1949 first adopted the c-word unabashedly, went so far as to profess admiration for the “*socialiste conservateur*” Klemens von Metternich. Russell Kirk, whose *Conservative Mind* in 1953 converted many a young Republican into a born-again Tory, was every bit as critical of John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham as Blond is today.

Twenty-five years later, Irving Kristol could muster only “two cheers for capitalism.” He and other neoconservatives meditated long on what Daniel Bell called “the cultural contradictions of capitalism.” Paleoconservatives also had doubts about our economic system, with Sam Francis declaring “capitalism the enemy” and Patrick Buchanan campaigning in 1992 on a “conservatism of the heart.” George Will quipped that was conservatism thinking with the wrong organ—yet Will self-consciously styled himself a Tory and wrote a book celebrating “statecraft as soulcraft.”

In practical politics, too, American conservatives have often made a point of promising to tame the market and create what George H.W. Bush called a “kinder, gentler America.” Yet the results have been disappointing. Richard Nixon

entertained the idea of creating a negative income tax to benefit the poor—but his escalation of the war in Vietnam (and Laos and Cambodia) and the Watergate scandal put the lie to the myth of Nixon's bleeding heart. George W. Bush's "compassionate conservatism" and vows to foster an "ownership society" may have sounded distant echoes of G.K. Chesterton's distributism. Yet Bush, too, is remembered for other things—like Enron, Abu Ghraib, Lehman Brothers, and "Mission Accomplished."

Conservatives of many stripes have recognized that there is something deficient in the American tradition. Yet attempts to supply the missing element have not only failed, they have served to provide rhetorical cover for further consolidation of wealth and power in Washington and Wall Street. Our experience differs from that of Great Britain. In *Red Tory*, Blond argues that the sum of Margaret Thatcher's free-market liberalism and New Labour's cultural liberalism has been a vacuum of intimacy speedily filled by new police powers. Surveillance is the remedy for a society of distrustful strangers. Liberalism of both sorts is the problem, and values conservatism is part of the answer—and will not only improve social life but also reduce the need for an intrusive state.

In the U.S., however, the greatest escalations of police powers have taken place under Republican presidents elected in the name of "values voters" or the "silent majority." Anti-liberal leaders like Nixon and the second Bush have only made matters worse—the culture coarsens all the more while the demands of national security displace those of hearth and home.

As actual morality disintegrates, politics becomes deeply moralistic. This is not a paradox: it is always easier for the virtocrat to demand that government reform society than for him to reform himself or his own neighborhood. Con-

servatives no less than liberals have indulged in morality by proxy, according to which the measure of a man is not how he behaves but how he votes and what ideology he professes. Control of government has become a substitute for leading a good life—as Robert Nisbet warned in *The Quest for Community*, "power comes to resemble community, especially in times of convulsive social change and of widespread preoccupation with personal identity, moral certainty, and social meaning."

What the American order lacks is not power but integrating institutions that stand apart from ideological warfare and the clash of personal interests. Red Toryism has a chance in Great Britain because that country retains a handful of institutions that keep alive the idea of the nation as spiritual community. The monarchy and the Church of England may be badly degraded, but they preserve at least the memory, and thus the psychological possibility, of a pre-liberal society predicated on something other than the nexus of cash and power. However feeble their voices may be, when Prince Charles praises beautiful architecture or when the Archbishop of Canterbury criticizes a war, some moral instruction takes place. They can shame the selfish interests of commerce and politics.

America does not just suffer from the absence of similar institutions to give authoritative voice to counter-values. We have national institutions, but not of the traditional, pre-liberal kind. Ours are the White House, the Pentagon, and the Federal Reserve. Everything else is the domain of wealth and private interest—including Congress and our churches. We do, however, have a national religion: the cult of American Exceptionalism that unites everyone from Pat Robertson to Christopher Hitchens. Its high priest is the president, to whom we turn in times of danger when divine help is most besought, such as after 9/11.

What happens if one injects an uncompromising critique of rights, individualism, and liberalism into this national machinery? The product may not be Red Toryism, but more executive secrecy, deficit spending, war, torture, and disempowerment of civil society. No wonder, then, that for all our national-greatness conservatives laud Benjamin Disraeli, they never sound like Tories. They are instead in the tradition of Caesar and Napoleon, of mass democracy and militarism.

The first task of the American Tory is Hippocratic: do no harm. Restrict at every turn the imperial institutions that have displaced the Founders' design. Congress should take precedence over the executive, even in foreign policy, as was intended in the Constitution. Our decentralized system has spared us some of the abuses to which Britain has succumbed—America is less of a surveillance state. But the diffusion of authority in the legislature and among the states creates obstacles for reform. There is no way around that: without formal institutions of authority, informal hierarchies rooted in excellence of character will have to do. George Washington, after all, had a higher place in the hearts of his countrymen than George III did in those of his subjects. Today the place for such ethical leadership is not in the White House, but in legislatures and the splintered institutions of civil society—perhaps most of all in the non-profit sector of think tanks and universities, the closest things we have to what Samuel Taylor Coleridge described as the clerisy. Our universities have fallen far short of their missions, but institutions such as the Tocqueville Forum, which hosted Phillip Blond at Georgetown, may yet provide seeds of regeneration. ■

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Spiritual Capitalism

Envy and social engineering, not the market, are to blame for our malaise.

By Nicholas Capaldi

LIKE TALES ABOUT VAMPIRES who keep coming back, claims that liberalism destroys society never seem to die. From John Ruskin and Karl Marx to Robert Bellah and Phillip Blond, the critics of Mill-style liberalism have accused it of atomizing society. They consistently misunderstand how political individualism and free markets relate to social cohesion.

The distinctive institutions of a liberal order are the technological project (transforming nature to serve human needs and interests), a more or less free-market economy, limitation of government to protect individual rights, the rule of law, and an emphasis on personal autonomy. This culture is the greatest force in the modern world; it has vastly improved the material conditions of life and institutionalized individual freedom.

Curiously, this culture is hardly understood even by those surrounded by it. There are two reasons for that. First, defenders of the liberal order have often unwittingly adopted the framework of their enemies, who in turn have defined liberalism by the silliest things that Jeremy Bentham, Ayn Rand, John Rawls, and Robert Nozick have said. Second, and even worse, the use of “social science” to explain human relations has blinded scholars to the true sources of this philosophy. Having abandoned Weber for Marx, Durkheim, Freud, and deconstruction, social scientists totally miss the spiritual roots of the liberal order. They presume a secular outlook in which religious belief is

just another misguided epiphenomenon, and who wants to base a liberal order on that?

In fact, there are two competing grand narratives about the liberal order. The first is that of John Locke and Adam Smith, which emphasizes not only freedom and technological progress but also the sentimental and religious foundations of human endeavor. As Locke writes in the *Second Treatise*:

God, who has given the world to men in common, has also given them reason to make use of it to the best advantage of life, and convenience... it cannot be supposed He meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. He gave it to the use of the Industrious and Rational ... not to the Fancy or Covetousness of the Quarrelsome and Contentious ... for it is labor indeed that puts the difference of value on everything... of the products of the earth useful to the life of man nine tenths are the effects of labor...

The second narrative is that of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Karl Marx, which stresses equality and attempts to rebut the Lockean account. It posits that far from satisfying genuine human needs, the arts and sciences are expressions of pride (or *amour propre*) and have led to consumerism and the loss of community. The Lockean social contract is characterized as one in which the rich and powerful coerce the less fortunate into institutionalizing inequality.

From the socialists Owen, Fourier, Proudhon, Louis Blanc, Saint-Simon, and Marx in the 19th century to a whole host of other writers in the 20th century and perhaps President Obama now, thinkers in this tradition have sought “more equal” opportunity, a “fairer” distribution of wealth, and the reorganization of society into smaller communities. They disagree on exactly how to transform the present system and fail to provide an explicit account of how the new structure will function. They, like Blond, describe what a new economy should accomplish but not how. What one senses above all in these writers is an adversarial relation to whatever they take the present system to be, a moral critique in which it is necessary to identify both “bad guys” and “victims.”

What the critics see—and also what they miss—is that a liberal order is in its economics, politics, and law a civil association. In the philosopher Michael Oakeshott’s terms, a civil association has no collective end, but exists to provide the context in which individuals pursue their personally chosen objectives. An enterprise association, by contrast, which was the form of social organization in the classical and medieval worlds as well as in many undeveloped nations today, has a collective goal that subsumes the individual. It is community as enterprise association for which the critics of liberalism, including many clergy, yearn.

But is a free society really so atomized and alienating? Going back to Locke, and as we are reminded by

Tocqueville, the real defenders of the liberal order have acknowledged that a civil association functions best when it rests upon a larger culture within which individuals voluntarily choose to join subsidiary enterprise associations such as a family, church, or local organizations. These sub-enterprise associations provide the spiritual capital—especially but not exclusively drawn from the Judeo-Christian heritage—that allows a liberal order to work. It is this spiritual capital that nourishes the free and responsible, inner-directed, autonomous individual. It is the smorgasbord of faiths in America, as opposed to state-sponsored religion in Islamic countries or the virulent secularism in Europe, that allows liberalism to flourish.

The drive to turn all of society into an enterprise association comes from people who have not made the transition to individuality. There is a whole complicated history behind this, but what is important is to recognize that the most serious problem within modern liberal societies is the presence of failed or incomplete individuals. Either unaware of or lacking faith in their ability to exercise self-discipline, incomplete individuals seek escape into the collective identity of communities insulated from the challenge of opportunity. These are people focused on avoiding failure rather than on achieving success. Incomplete individuals identify themselves by feelings of envy, resentment, self-distrust, victimization, and self-pity—in short, an inferiority complex. Anti-Americanism abroad and lack of faith in American Exceptionalism at home are the clearest manifestations.

Having little or no sense of individuality, they are incapable of loving what is best in themselves; unable to love themselves, they are incapable of loving others; incapable of loving others, they cannot sustain life within the family; in fact, they find family life stultifying.

What they substitute for love of self, others, and family is loyalty to a mythical community. Instead of an umpire, they want a leader, and they conceive of such leaders as protectors who will relieve them of all responsibility. This is what makes their sense of community pathological. What they end up with are leaders who are themselves incomplete individuals and who seek to control others because they cannot control themselves. They prize equality and not competition, and in place of a market economy and limited government, we get economic and political tyranny.

It is not the institutions of a liberal order—technology, markets, limited government, the rule of law—that are responsible for the social pathologies we witness. Original sin undoubtedly accounts for some of our troubles, and it

cannot be overcome by techniques of social control derived from soft sciences that are often masks for private political agendas. But beyond the weaknesses intrinsic to human nature, the social ills of our time more directly reflect the conscious, systematic destruction of our spiritual capital by the ever-expanding role of government fueled by utopian delusions. The source of these evils lies not in political and economic freedom, but in past failures at social engineering and the attempt to obfuscate those failures with even more ingenious applications of state power. ■

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Ticket to Utopia

Dreams of cultural renaissance inspire, but conservatives must reside in reality.

By Patrick J. Deneen

PHILLIP BLOND'S diagnosis of the pathologies of our age is as perceptive and piercing as any that I have yet encountered. He follows in a long tradition of independent thinkers willing to break with party—or at least to bend his relationship to it—by offering a clear-sighted analysis of the failings of the contemporary political alignments. But reading him from this side of the pond, one cannot help but wonder not only at the plausibility of his suggestions for England and Europe, but about their transferability to America.

One is tempted to be at once more pessimistic and more optimistic about the prospects for any “restoration of ethos” in the United States. As a world superpower in both economic and military realms, it is unlikely that America will choose willingly to embrace an ethos that would require individuals to live more locally and invest their destinies more personally in those of fellow citizens. We have been long accustomed to thinking that freedom consists in the expansion of power, mobility, and money-making, often at

the price of more local forms of affiliation. The state and market have long conspired to create a national (and increasingly international) system, eviscerating affiliation with local custom and places. To believe otherwise, it is thought, is tantamount to rejecting the American dream.

At the same time, America has resources in its tradition that may prove promising for a certain kind of Red Tory agenda, though the label will need to be changed for an American audience. Federalism, while moribund, is embedded in our constitutional structure, and its practices lie within the memory of many living Americans. Relative cultural autonomy of various regions and places persists in some forms even to this day. While subject both to impulses of secularization as well as certain kinds of religious mania, America remains a more mainstream religious nation than much of Europe, and it is ultimately in the Judeo-Christian religions, which pre-date liberalism, that an alternative and truer understanding of our anthropology remains available. The insights of the agrarian tradition, even as they impact on urbanism—particularly as they have been articulated in recent years by Wendell Berry—are seeing something of a revival as a younger generation confronts its inheritance of a degraded and depleted planet. Finally, for many decades, Americans have remained interested in the writings of Alexis de Tocqueville—even as Europe has all but ignored his analysis (notably, Tocqueville's name is absent from Blond's book)—whose warning about the individualizing and collectivizing tendencies of democracy have long been part of our national self-understanding. In these respects, Blond's arguments on behalf of a more palpable, local, and associational basis for our social and political arrange-

ments seem at least a dimly plausible future, though doubtless daunting in extremis to realize.

Perhaps in the American context a "revolution" is not necessary. Still, the evidence of the past half-century or more of failures to reinvigorate federalism, to rein in both the expanse of the state and the role of a reckless market, and to revive a more Jeffersonian form of democratic self-reliance among communities throughout the nation should at the very least be a chastening reminder of the deep challenge involved in achieving Blond's vision.

In the end, the diagnosis offered by *Red Tory* probably calls for more Kirk/Nisbet circumspection than Blond is able to muster. That kind of grimness—if not pessimism—provides a strong sense of realism and recognition about the daunting nature of the task at hand. It is also the basic source of that most essential aspect of the conservative disposition: the ability to acknowledge and even anticipate unintended consequences. There is a strangely "liberal" quality to Blond's chirpy catalogue of recommendations, which, it is unquestioningly implied, will result in the healing of a broken society, either preceded or elicited by a universal change of mind about our very nature. One fundamental and invaluable contribution of conservatism at least since Edmund Burke has been its capacity to offer a chastened assessment of such claims and to commend circumspection over the belief in our capacity to effect a revolution in mores and manners. The conundrum faced by Blond is how to effect a revolution that will undo a revolution. Yet a more conservative disposition would recognize that any revolution—even one in the name of conservatism—is likely to fall short (to be subsumed by the dominant liberal

ethos) or to be so powerful as necessarily to generate an ocean of unintended consequences, perhaps even ones that undermine the stated aim.

There is much to admire in the work of Phillip Blond, and I am energized by his enthusiasm and ambition. But there is also much about which to be worried—and worry, if not much in evidence in Blond's thought, may be the hallmark of the conservative mind. ■

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The Virtuous Liberal

William Gladstone's politics of prudence

By Melvin L. Schut

BENJAMIN DISRAELI is back in fashion. The dapper Earl of Beaconsfield, twice prime minister under Queen Victoria, makes a comeback whenever conservatives of a certain bent—toward “national greatness” rather than “limited government”—go hunting for a genealogy. Writing in the *Weekly Standard*, David Gelernter hailed him as “the inventor of modern conservatism” and “a 19th-century neocon.” Sam Tanenhaus, *New York Times Book Review* editor with a hobbyist's interest in the Right, has urged conservatives to rediscover Disraeli's tradition, which he believes best represented in recent years by Bill Clinton and Barack Obama.

Disraeli may be every liberal's favorite conservative, but his great rival, William Ewart Gladstone, is an orphan: too much the classical liberal for today's Left, too anti-imperialist for the contemporary Right. Only briefly, 30 years ago, did he come back into vogue when Margaret Thatcher and her free-marketeer allies cited him as an inspiration. They were right to do so, but Gladstone deserves attention for more than just his economics.

Early on, he seemed a near reactionary, but he embarked on the rarest of political odysseys, moving from right to left as he aged. The Tory became leader of a new Liberal Party that coalesced around him; he went from being a self-described “out-and-out inequalitarian” to a backer of “the masses against the classes.” His policies over four terms as prime minister and four as chancellor of the Exchequer—roughly analo-

gous to secretary of the Treasury—were called liberal in his time, but appear conservative in ours: he was largely successful in limiting government, imposing fiscal discipline, keeping taxes low, devolving power, and expanding political and religious liberties. Friends and opponents alike admired his integrity, yet he was also loathed for his forthright Christian piety. After meeting him, Henry James noted, “Gladstone is very fascinating—his urbanity extreme—his eye that of a man of genius—and his apparent self-surrender to what he is talking of, without a flaw.”

Gladstone was born in Liverpool to evangelicals of Scottish origin. His mother descended from minor gentry. His father, John, was middle class and had made a fortune as a businessman in the Americas. To raise the status of his family beyond mere wealth, John Gladstone purchased land and a seat in the notoriously corrupt Parliament. He also modeled three of his sons' education on the example of George Canning, a broadly liberal, pro-commerce Tory of modest background who maintained close ties with the family. “[U]nder the shadow of the great name of Canning,” Gladstone recalled, as a youth he had “rejoiced in the removal of religious disabilities” and in “the establishment of free commercial interchanges between nations; with Canning, and under the shadow of the yet more venerable name of Burke, my youthful mind and imagination were impressed.”

Gladstone followed Canning to Eton and Oxford. When a seat in the newly

reformed House of Commons opened, he stood for office and was elected as a Tory at age 22. At first, he retained the skepticism he had expressed in the Oxford Union toward the 1823 Parliamentary Reform Act. He saw this legislation, which made representation more equal between the cities and countryside, as a “revolution.” This stance would embarrass him later, but his impressive performances in the House of Commons propelled him to the rank of junior minister in Sir Robert Peel's short-lived first administration.

Outside of government, Gladstone spent the 1830s developing his religious and political beliefs. He discussed their intersection in his first book, *The State in its Relations with the Church*, in which he made his case for an established church, understood as an active, guiding connection between the nation's spiritual and civil powers. Invoking Burke, Coleridge, and many Greek and Roman writers, Gladstone argued for an organic conception of society. Yet contrary to the claims of Macaulay—who infamously proclaimed Gladstone “the rising hope of those stern and unbending Tories”—he stopped short of endorsing theocracy. Instead, Gladstone surveyed the range of options between a completely secular state and one ruled on religious principles. He accepted situations that would disqualify establishment, but argued that they did not exist anywhere in the United Kingdom.

When Peel returned to power in 1841, he promoted Gladstone to vice presi-

dent and then president of the Board of Trade, placing him in the Cabinet at the tender age of 33. Gladstone was now at the heart of economic policy, which centered upon the controversy over tariffs, specifically the notorious Corn Laws. He soon became a convinced free trader, vigorously supporting Peel's economic reforms against the protectionist majority within his own party, including Disraeli.

Peel succeeded in abolishing the Corn Laws in 1846, at the cost of splitting the Conservative Party and losing office. He and his supporters, including Gladstone, subsequently drifted between the Conservatives, the classically liberal Whigs, and the democratic Radicals, courted by all sides. In this setting, Gladstone served three times as chancellor in coalitions of Peelites, Whigs, and Radicals. He transformed Britain's economy, relentlessly advancing free trade, reduction of overall taxation, and regulatory reform. All these measures were aimed at creating a framework for free-market prosperity, supported by a minimal state. His decision to serve a second time as the Whig-Radical coalition's chancellor burnt his last bridge to the Conservatives. He was now the biggest beast on the progressive side of politics.

Away from his public role, Gladstone was happily married to Catherine Glynne, who was every bit as devout a Christian as he, and with whom he had eight children. Notoriously, with the knowledge and indeed cooperation of his wife, Gladstone began in the 1850s to undertake "rescue work"—saving prostitutes from their lives of sin and exploitation. It was unusual behavior for a member of Parliament. And although no hint of sexual impropriety attached to Gladstone, tongues did wag, in particular over his connection to a former courtesan and Christian convert named Laura Thistlethwayte.

His relationship with her was one of the few topics that he did not confide to his wife. But like his overall association with working women, its existence was well known among the political elite. One contemporary wrote, "Gladstone seems to be going out of his mind. ... Gladstone's last passion is Mrs. Thistlethwayte. He goes to dinner with her and she in return in her preachments to her congregation exhorts them to put up their prayers on behalf of Mr. G's reform bill." Another observer noted that Mrs. Thistlethwayte had "since her marriage taken to religion, and preaches or lectures. This, with her beauty, is the attraction to G and it is characteristic of him to be indifferent to scandal." Whatever the nature of their bond, she provided Gladstone with an emotional outlet. He confessed to her how "from morning to night, all my life is pressure, pressure to get on, to dispatch the thing I have in hand, that I may go to the next, urgently waiting for me. Not for years past have I written except in haste a letter to my wife. As for my children, they rarely get any."

The pressure drove Gladstone to the pinnacle of politics. In 1868, he made his debut as prime minister, heading Britain's first Liberal government. It was also the first government elected after the Conservatives had passed the Second Reform Act, which extended voting rights further than Gladstone had thought appropriate. Disraeli had hoped to win the working classes for the Tories, but it was Gladstone's new party that ascended.

As prime minister, Gladstone shored up his reform agenda. Economic policy remained important, but his legislative program went further and included disestablishing the Irish Church (despite his earlier thoughts on church and state), reforming Irish land rights and universities, restructuring education in England and Scotland, and introducing

examinations that opened the civil service and the armed forces to merit. Gladstone also tried to make abolition of the income tax the central issue of the 1874 general election. Disraeli foiled this plan by adopting the same policy. This canny strategy paid off for the Conservatives: the Liberals won more votes, but Disraeli's party took more seats in Parliament and formed the next government.

If Gladstone's political career had ended at this point, as he intended, his name would have been made. His financial policies had lifted all boats in a rising tide, keeping class conflict at bay and encouraging self-government for those who proved themselves capable of it. Gladstone's platform connected the issues of wealth creation, social opportunity, the balance between indirect and direct taxation, the question of extending voting rights, and even foreign policy, since free trade was as much intended to create wealth as to generate peace and international cooperation. As prime minister, he ensured that his Treasury policies were kept in place, giving them time to bear fruit. In this respect, Gladstone was responsible for creating a consensus on political economy that would last until World War I.

The defeat of the Liberals in 1874 meant Gladstone's resignation and semi-retirement as party leader. Yet he continued to exert tremendous influence on politics by steering public opinion, frequently addressing crowds of tens of thousands, sometimes for hours at a time. He famously protested Turkish crimes in Bulgaria and the inadequate British response to them, greatly contributing to his reputation as a liberal interventionist. Disraeli quipped that of all the Bulgarian horrors, Gladstone's pamphlet on the issue was "perhaps the greatest."

Eventually he returned to politics proper to lead three more govern-

ments—at one point serving simultaneously as chancellor and prime minister. But none of these ministries was as successful as his first. They were dominated by frustrated attempts to pacify Ireland and renewed protectionism abroad. Foreign policy, too, was troubled. Minus Disraeli's romantic rhetoric of empire, Gladstone's approach did not differ fundamentally from that of the Conservatives—they had established an imperial consensus much as Gladstone had established a financial one.

His political life came to a close soon after a second bill to grant Home Rule to Ireland failed. Increasingly frustrated by health problems (including declining eyesight) and fruitlessly fighting his Cabinet colleagues in a characteristic attempt to reduce naval expenditures, Gladstone resigned as prime minister for the last time in March 1894. His final Cabinet meeting proved a tearful spectacle—much to the scorn of the great man himself, who remained stoic throughout and afterward referred to the episode as “the blubbing Cabinet.” His resignation still a secret except to the Cabinet and his immediate family, that afternoon he conducted Question Time in the Commons as if nothing had happened. He then left the chamber, never to set foot in Parliament again.

Gladstone seemed to have changed his curious mind about many things in the course of his career. Nonetheless, his apparent transformation from a priggish young reactionary to enlightened old progressive masked a fundamental consistency. His politics were always informed by an intense and idiosyncratic meditation on the relationship between Christianity and the classics—especially the use of Plato, Aristotle, and Homer to shed light on the Christian faith. His political and religious views were interdependent, and his scholarly

publications on Homer and Bishop Butler (who adapted Aristotle's analysis of virtue to Christianity) should not be seen in isolation. Whatever the changes in his politics, they all occurred within this framework. Indeed, as he said in 1891: “I think I can truly put up all the change that has come into my politics into a sentence. I was brought up to distrust and dislike liberty, I learned to believe in it.”

Yet liberty for him never meant freedom from hierarchy and authority sustained by Christian virtue, and he never abandoned an organic conception of society. Throughout his life he praised Dante, Augustine, Aristotle, and Butler as the “four Doctors” who guided him, appending Burke to the list as well, while rejecting Bentham and both Mills. His friend and official biographer, John Morley, relates that during a friendly chat in his eighties, Gladstone claimed to be “of the same mind, and perhaps for the same sort of reason, as Joseph de Maistre, that contempt for Locke is the beginning of knowledge.” Much like another friend, Lord Acton, Gladstone believed in natural and divine law, duties and obligations, and historically-grown liberties—all while being dubious about abstract rights.

In practice, this vision amounted to a politics of prudence. His skepticism of the romantic strain of Toryism long popular in the Conservative Party contributed to his progressive turn. He introduced reform measures in terms of restoration, and he attempted to placate Ireland by showing its people that they could work through existing institutions. Similarly, Gladstone's reluctance to extend voting rights and his dislike of the income tax were based on their potentially disruptive effects on the existing social order. Political prudence, in Gladstone's eyes, meant recognizing our inherent limitations as fallen creatures. Accordingly, he saw the aristoc-

racy and the monarchy as legitimate forces in society and in government, but only as long as they lived up to their duties. A traditional liberal education, centered upon the classics and Christianity, was his preferred test of virtue, intended to produce Homeric Christian gentlemen.

Although he was the founder of a great political party, Gladstone cautioned in his first book that one must avoid “sinking into a party man ... instead of man in politics.” The Liberal Party emerged around him precisely because he was an outsider: he did not fully belong to any of the contending progressive factions, and the Peelites had dissolved as a separate group. Arguably, Gladstone remained a “Canningite” throughout his career—a liberal Tory, paradoxically cautious of reform, yet at home with Peel.

Contemporary conservatives tend to read much into his association with the Liberal Party. In today's politics, Gladstone's fierce opposition to anything resembling a welfare state, which he maintained to the very end, would make him a poor fit for the social-democratic Left. As long as he remained in politics, Gladstone fought to keep socialism at bay. Once he was gone, the Liberal Party became a different animal. Clearly his particular variant of the politics of prudence—call it liberal inequalitarianism—would be unfeasible in our democratic age, as he would have been the first to recognize. Even so, Tocqueville successfully translated his own aristocratic liberalism into a democratic context, with the help of America's example. We might hope the same can be done for Gladstone's. ■

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Before We Bomb

“Diplomacy has failed,” Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) told AIPAC. “Iran is on the verge of becoming nuclear and we cannot afford that.”

“We have to contemplate the final option,” said Sen. Evan Bayh (D-Ind.), “the use of force to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.”

War is a “terrible thing,” said Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), but “sometimes it is better to go to war than to allow the Holocaust to develop a second time.” Graham then describes the war we Americans should fight: “If military force is ever employed, it should be done in a decisive fashion. The Iran government’s ability to wage conventional war against its neighbors and our troops in the region should not exist. They should not have one plane that can fly or one ship that can float.”

Danielle Pletka of the American Enterprise Institute, Neocon Central, writes, “The only questions remaining, one Washington politico tells me, are who starts it, and how it ends.”

As to who starts it, we know the answer. Tehran has not started a war in memory and is not going to launch a suicide attack on a superpower with thousands of nuclear weapons. As with Iraq in 2003, the war will be launched by the United States against a nation that did not attack us—to strip it of weapons it does not have.

But to Graham’s point, if we are going to start this war, prudence dictates that we destroy Iran’s ability to fight back. At a minimum, we would have to use airstrikes and cruise missiles to hit a range of targets. First, Iran’s nuclear facilities such as the uranium enrichment plant at Natanz, the U.S.-built reactor that makes medical isotopes, the power plant at Bushehr, the centrifuge

facility near Qom, and the heavy water plant at Arak.

Our problem here is that the last three are not even operational and all are subject to UN inspections. There are Russians at Bushehr. And there is no evidence that diversion to a weapons program has taken place.

If Iran has secret plants working on nuclear weapons, why have we not been told where and demanded that UN inspectors be let in? Why did 16 U.S. intelligence agencies, three years ago, tell us they did not exist and Iran had given up its drive for a nuclear weapon in 2003? If Iran is on the “verge” of a bomb, as Schumer claims, the entire U.S. intelligence community should be decapitated for incompetence.

In a hyped headline, “CIA: Iran capable of producing nukes,” the *Washington Times* said that a new CIA report claims, “Iran continues to develop a range of capabilities that could be applied to producing nuclear weapons, if a decision is made to do so.” Excuse me, but this is mush. We could say the same of a dozen countries that use nuclear power and study nuclear technology.

But let us continue with Graham’s blitzkrieg war. To prevent a counterattack, the United States would have to take out Iran’s 14 airfields and all its warplanes on the ground. We would also have to sink every warship and submarine in Iran’s navy and destroy some 200 missile, patrol, and speedboats operated by the Revolutionary Guard, else they would be dropping mines and mauling our warships.

Also, it would be crucial on day one to

hit Iran’s launch sites and missile plants for, like Saddam in 1991, Iran would proba-

bly attack Israel, to make it an American and Israeli war on an Islamic republic.

Among other critical targets would be the Silkworm anti-ship missile sites on Iran’s coastline that would menace U.S. warships and oil tankers transiting the Strait of Hormuz. Any Iranian attack on ships or seeding of mines would likely close the Gulf and send world oil prices soaring.

Revolutionary Guard barracks, especially the Quds Force near Iraq, would have to be hit to slow troop movement to and across the border into Iraq to kill U.S. soldiers and civilians. The same might be necessary against Iranian troops near Afghanistan.

With Iran’s ally Hezbollah in south Beirut, all U.S. civilians should probably be pulled out of Lebanon before an attack, lest they wind up dead or hostages. And how safe would Americans be in the Gulf, especially Bahrain, home of the U.S. Fifth Fleet, a predominantly Shia island?

And whose side would Shia Iraq take? Would we have to intern all Iranian nationals in the United States, as we did Germans and Italians in 1941? How many terror attacks on soft targets in the U.S. could we expect from Iranian and Hezbollah agents in reprisal for our killing thousands of civilians in hundreds of strikes on Iran?

Before the War Party stampedes us into yet another fight, the Senate should find out if Tehran is really on the “verge” of getting a bomb, and why deterrence, which has never failed us, cannot succeed with Iran. ■

Cultured Conservatism

Why aesthetics is at least as important as politics

In the literary journal Image: Art, Faith, Mystery, Gregory Wolfe presents the essays, poems, criticism, paintings, and photographs of a wide variety of religiously informed writers and artists—too wide a variety, for many conservatives. Annie Dillard, Denis Donoghue, Ron Hansen, Mark Helprin, Kathleen Norris, Richard Rodriguez, and Larry Woiwode all sit on the journal's editorial advisory board. Many of his critics, Wolfe admits, would prefer that Image be a "highbrow outpost of the culture wars." But he has determinedly charted an independent course.

Before he started Image with his wife, Suzanne, Wolfe was a child of the conservative movement. He attended Hillsdale College, where he studied under Russell Kirk, and later served as one of Kirk's assistants at Piety Hill. He then migrated to the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, where he edited the Intercollegiate Review. He left ISI in 1989 to found Image. But he never turned against the brand of conservatism he imbibed from Kirk; rather, he acted on what he took to be its most important cultural insights.

Jeremy Beer: *Image* celebrated its 20th anniversary last year. Has its course surprised you?

Gregory Wolfe: The major surprise is that we're still around. When we started, I imagined we might only last a few issues—enough to make footnote 279

on page 400 of some scholar's cultural history of the late 20th century. ("This short-lived literary journal attempted to show that art and faith could still interact powerfully à la Dante and Milton.") At the time of starting *Image*, I wasn't entirely sure this was still happening. My own education was profoundly influenced by 20th-century writers who grappled with faith, particularly T.S. Eliot and Flannery O'Connor, and I posited that people like that should be continuing to produce material, even in the postmodern era, but I wasn't sure. As it happens, we're sending issue 65 to the printer this week.

Beer: To what extent do you think *Image* helped create those kinds of writers, if nothing else by providing space?

Wolfe: Part of what we do is to make certain things believable. I came across a throwaway line from a book review by one of the great critics of the 1930s that said, "This book is worthy. It adds to the stock of available reality." The minute that phrase entered my brain, I knew what it was all about. How much reality is available to a culture at any given time? What are the blinders? What is considered possible and not possible? One of the missions of *Image* is to enlarge the stock of available reality in a way that enables people to say, "Oh! I can do that?" Some people have been willing to come out, to borrow some language, thanks to what *Image* has done. These things build on each other, and one

organization becomes part of a larger movement.

Beer: I like that phrase, "enlarge the stock of available reality." It's related to another phrase—"openness to mystery"—that you've used to describe what you're trying to create. You've talked about how reason, imagination, and faith have to be integrated for us to achieve that kind of openness. What are the main factors that you see in American life today that keep that from occurring?

Wolfe: My education in this area was profoundly influenced by my mentor at Hillsdale College, Russell Kirk. He argued that two forces were diametrically opposed: ideology and imagination. The ideologue is somebody who has a closed system of abstract certainties about the world that results in pride and a loss of connection to reality. So the ideologue has to impose his vision on the world more by violence than by persuasion.

Imagination is an awareness of reality outside of ourselves and our limited natures, the difficulty of being able to comprehend not only the mysteries of the universe, but even the full ramifications of political and social action. Imagination cultivates a sense of our contingent nature as human beings and seeks humility before that mystery—that is what I understood Kirk to be saying was the conservative virtue. Humility before the world's complexity meant that the conservative was someone who

refrained from large abstract social plans and an arrogant approach to the world.

That's precisely what literature and the arts teach: the world is an ambiguous place, and art and literature are needed to cultivate the imagination's awareness of how tricky it is to get things right. Most conservatives have forgotten this: they have chosen ideology over imagination and power over persuasion. That's why they mostly just talk to themselves.

Beer: You told me once that you thought of yourself as prosecuting a strategy of "deep conservatism" with *Image*. Do you worry about attracting people with genuinely conservative instincts in the Kirkian sense?

Wolfe: I do. Kirk was a paradox. He was very old-fashioned, yet if you look at the people he befriended in the literary world of the 20th century, many were avant-garde, high modernist writers and artists—not only T.S. Eliot, but people like Wyndham Lewis and Roy Campbell. He used to joke that he couldn't read modern literature, but he wrote a great book on Eliot and had an instinct for how changing artistic styles and forms were needed to keep alive unchanging principles, whether of religious faith or fundamental philosophical, political insights into the nature of man. He joked about not reading anything after Sir Walter Scott, but these were the people he befriended and wrote about, so I decided to do that in my own way.

One of the things I run into in the conservative movement today is the notion that there is only one aesthetic style appropriate to a conservative vision—neoclassicism. I find that to be simplistic, this notion that all poems must be sonnets and all buildings must

have Greek columns. Conservatives have a much more calcified attitude toward the arts than they should. They should be more Burkean in their understanding of how culture changes. They should remember that culture, in order to preserve the mystery of perennial truths, needs to seek new forms. This goes back to the issue of contingency and humility: no single style can encompass all of reality. Eliot wrote "The Waste Land" as a series of fragments that reflected modern fragmentation, and some conservatives have damned him for that. Yet if you read the poem carefully, you will see how those fragments point to a wholeness that can heal the divisions of modernity. Eliot, the non-classicist, imaginatively inhabits modernity but subtly undermines it, demonstrating a truly conservative vision.

Beer: It's not just that there is a calcification among conservatives in terms of preferred forms, there is also a kind of "movementization" of conservatism, whereby only things that have received stamps of approval from official figures are fit subjects for discussion. It's not that conservative intellectuals stopped reading anything after Sir Walter Scott, but when it comes to fiction, they certainly have stopped reading anything after Walker Percy.

Wolfe: Yes, which you might say leads to a shrinking of the stock of available reality. "Movementization" is certainly one of the things that drove me away from conservatism in terms of my day-to-day life. I was born into it: my father was working at the Foundation for Economic Education in 1953, when William F. Buckley, fresh out of Yale, stopped by and said, "I want to start a journal called *National Review*." So you can imagine the world I inherited: I went to Hillsdale

College, worked for the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, went to Philadelphia Society meetings, and was enriched by that world but was also, in the end, put off by the cliquishness and incestuousness of it.

Ideology ultimately becomes self-referential. It becomes less about engaging the culture and more about beating the tribal drums, which can be an effective way to raise money and consolidate power but remarkably ineffective in changing the world around you. From Kirk, I got the feeling that you should go out and find out who people are—he who is not against us is for us. That's where imagination comes in. We should be constantly scanning the world for people whose vision is congenial, if not in lockstep. In movement conservatism there's a constant undercurrent of deciding who's in the fold and who isn't, but my argument is, "Dammit, the fold should be bigger."

Beer: Was the "capture the politics" strategy that influential conservatives like Buckley put into place the fatal error? Would they have been better off abjuring politics, at least at the national level, for a cultural strategy that focused on encouraging and educating artists, writers, editors, novelists, publishing executives, musicians, and the like? Could such a strategy have achieved a significantly different kind of success?

Wolfe: It's a question of balance and priorities. I would never advocate that people should be apolitical. But conservatism taught me that, in the long run, culture shapes politics far more powerfully than politics shapes culture. I found that the very nature of politicization was inimical to the task of building and sustaining order. It thrived on a narrative of decline and its strategy was destructive rather than constructive.

I am not about to say that things haven't gotten bad in Western civilization over the last 100 years, but on the other hand, one of the things a deep conservatism knows is that things are always going to hell in a handbasket. It knows how to balance tearing down with building up. I once wrote a piece called "Why I Am a Conscientious Objector in the Culture Wars." The argument I made was that if both sides were so busy spraying toxic chemicals on each other's crops, by the time they were through, nothing would be able to grow.

What moves people's hearts? The great stories and images that enable them to discover who they are. The political process involves debate about how we understand ourselves, but the meaning of the terms used in that debate is generated through art and culture. If you reduce everything to technocratic and political/economic terms, you also lose the capacity to move anyone. That's why I was drawn toward the effort to renew the twin wellsprings of culture, art and faith.

Beer: I think it is easy to misunderstand this argument about the limitations of declinism as a point of view. It seems to me the way to characterize your view is not that certain goods can't be lost or attenuated, but that declinism without hope, without a recognition that things are always getting partly better too, can be deeply destructive. In fact, it sounds like this almost drove you to despair as a young conservative.

Wolfe: I'm a pretty sturdy guy, but there came a point where I had the equivalent of a nervous breakdown—or perhaps a "vocation breakdown." There was a moment when I realized that as much as I liked witty satire and withering cri-

tiques, I couldn't sustain a life on that. I had to create, and I had to live in a certain kind of hope.

It's not about withdrawing into an ivory tower or a palace of art and saying, "I don't care about the battle of ideas or concrete political action in the world." But it does come down to asking when political movements become enclosed ideological enclaves without a living, breathing interactivity with the larger world.

Beer: In a recent editorial in *Image*, you made a distinction between "activist making" and "contemplative knowing" as a dominant way of being in or finding meaning in the world. It seems that for all their complaints about politicization, conservatives and Christians seem to share the modern preference for activist making.

Wolfe: In astrophysics, there is a notion that somewhere there is a huge force of gravity called "The Great Attractor," and a bunch of galaxies are all caught in that force. I think human lives are drawn to gravity wells of vision, and they really do change the way people act and think in the world. For example, without St. Francis or Dante, it would be impossible to understand the medieval world and its vision—its marvelous balance between heaven and earth, the eternal and the mundane. Why should our time be any different?

Beer: There needs to be an attractor force, and that doesn't come about through politics and activist making. Is this prejudice in favor of making rather than knowing reinforced by the new digital and online technological forms we have? I'm thinking of the common Internet acronym "TLDR" (Too Long, Didn't Read). Doesn't that suggest that a deep

antipathy to contemplation is inscribed in the heart of these kinds of communication technologies, or am I committing the conservative sin of being overly skeptical?

Wolfe: No, I think that's a real concern. As someone who edits a literary quarterly in the age of Twitter, imagine my angst about what I do for a living. I'm very sympathetic to arguments made by critics like Neil Postman in his book *Amusing Ourselves to Death* and, in a more contemporary context, Sven Birkerts's *The Gutenberg Elegies*, which defends the contemplative interiority that literary reading develops—and what it can do for the individual and for society as a whole.

It's important that one not become a Luddite and turn one's back on technology but find ways to hedge it around with cautionary fences. For *Image*, that means the blog on our website is a kind of un-blog—not 200-word blurts of bloviation but 800-word meditations. We're trying to run with the reality of the technology but provide some contextualizing to counter its worst dangers.

Beer: You wrote in your recent editorial dealing with the Booker Prize-winning novel *Wolf Hall*: "In a very real sense we are all Henry VIII today, autonomous individuals who fear the claim of tradition and transcendence as inherently oppressive." Doesn't that point precisely to how modernity operates in a unique way to close us off from mystery and the real?

Wolfe: Yes, absolutely. The competing definitions of what liberty or freedom might mean have gone in one very powerful direction—toward the autonomous individual. There are a lot of things that tend to back that up, including an economic system that is essentially geared

toward making individual desire the sum and substance of reality. We talk about liberty yet don't realize just how ambiguous the concept is. We have conservatives and liberals both touting an individualistic understanding of liberty that denudes human beings of the kind of obligations and connections outside of themselves that in my opinion help to generate real freedom.

Beer: You're involved in *Communion and Liberation*, the Catholic lay movement that grew out of Father Luigi Giussani's work in Italy in the '50s and '60s. What can non-CL folks, Catholic or otherwise, learn from that movement about how to fruitfully engage their communities and neighbors?

Wolfe: The first thing that struck me about CL is that the people I met were decisively over the dilemma I had found myself in for so long. They seemed to not be burdened by the need to critique everything, they didn't seem to be dominated by the narrative of decline. They seemed to have a kind of life and energy and hope that I found refreshing. So much of the conservative world, whether the world of politics or religion, is essentially a culture of critique.

Here I felt like I had stumbled into an Alpine ski party at 3 a.m. when the grappa had gone around the room a few too many times. The vitality and inner freedom in these people was amazing to me. I was intrigued because I also sensed a great devotion to tradition, and I didn't know how those things worked together.

It came down to learning Father Giussani's fundamental insights. The simplest way to put it is that faith is fundamentally about presence. It's about an encounter with the divine. In a way, this connected to my conservative background and vision of the world: the

encounter with reality generates meaning and order. Great literature and art and true worship are about how to keep that encounter alive so that it continues to generate order within us.

The cultivation of human companionship—of people who share this experience, as opposed to their ideological subscribing to a set of bullet points—becomes a truer form of fidelity to the tradition that has bound people together over the centuries than the other expressions that have reduced it to abstraction and "orthodoxy." For me, CL provided a nexus for all these different things to come together: the positive versus declinist mentality, the concreteness that art asks of us as opposed to the abstraction of ideas.

Beer: Perhaps we could end by saying that despite all his work on behalf of the imagination and his reading and essays about even avant-garde artists, maybe the worst decision Russell Kirk ever made was to put the canons of conservatism into bullet points.

Wolfe: He was a great communicator, and it's important to care about communicating to people, but I think that was a temptation he probably should have resisted. ■

Jeremy Beer is former editor in chief of ISI Books, which is publishing Gregory Wolfe's forthcoming collection of essays, Beauty Will Save the World.

Rapping with the Chairman

The American Conservative's *Chase Madar caught up with the embattled Republican National Committee chairman as he flew to Pebble Beach to promote his new book, fulfill speaking engagements, and raise money.*

Michael Steele: I think it should absolutely be up to the individual. Or, barring that, up to the states. But only for pregnant women, definitely. And it should be banned entirely, because this goes beyond personal choice. That's my position—always has been, always will be. That answer your question? How do you like me now?

I haven't asked anything yet.

The Pack Rats! I've always thoroughly enjoyed them. Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr. And Dean Martin! Truth is, I'm just like everyone else, living paycheck to paycheck, chartered jet to chartered jet, listening to the Pack Rats. Got that?

OK, so you like the Rat Pack. What else is in your iPod?

My iPod is a big tent, a real cross-section. Grandmaster Flash, love him. But I'm old school. Dean Martin. Oh yeah, and Richard Wagner? With the *Götterdämmerung*? Tell me, did Siegfried just sit there and let Wotan push him around? Hell no, he smashed Wotan's spear up good! And that's pretty much

what the Republican Party has to do, what America has to do, if you follow me. And I love P. Diddy.

I'm not sure if I—

Wagner, he just didn't give an F. The Dean Martin of his day. You've gotta respect that. Always been a big fan. Oh and my favorite show? "Family Man," with the dog, and the gay baby. And I know Haley Barbour loves it too. He told me on the Facebook, which is how we communicate, to reach out to young people. Gay baby, big tent!

Speaking of the entertainment business, why do so few showbiz celebrities seem to be Republicans?

Now wait a minute! All the stars with real talent are absolutely on our side! Jon Voight, Robert DeVillie, The Terminator, and the guy who plays the dwarf from the "Lord of the Rings" movies. No, not the hobbit. Not any of the hobbits. You can keep the hobbits. I mean the dwarf: long beard, funny voice. "Don't toss me," [*waves arms*] remember? Heh heh, oh I love that stuff. Now who do the Democrats have? Didn't think soooooo!

You've expressed some contradictory judgments about Rush Limbaugh in the past. What are your thoughts about him now?

Well with Rush, what can I say except that I love the man and what he does for our party! [*Sighs deeply.*] And he's inflammatory, divisive, and frankly, he really comes on ugly! Actually, he's an incredible suppository of wisdom and knowledge for all us conservatives! We don't appreciate him enough!

What is it like to be the first African-American head of the National Republican Party?

I am sick and tired—sick and tired—of liberals and Democrats playing the race

card. Look, we've come a long way since 1963! The most important political leader in this nation is a black man. On top of that, so is the president! How awesome is that?

What plans do you have to restore the Republican Party to national dominance?

Well, I'm glad you asked because it so happens I have a 12-step action plan to defeat the Obama agenda. Or as I sometimes say, the Obamagenda. The Obamageddon, if you will. Obama...the Obamanable Snowman?!?! The Ohhhhh, the Ohhh...

Er, your 12-step plan?

My 12-step action plan!

Step 1: Formulate a 12-step action plan. It's that simple. Formulate it somewhere calm and quiet, like the saloon of your chartered jet before they wheel up the single-malt cart. There's no action without a plan, Stan!

Step 2: Make sure your pencils are all sharpened. Preparation is key.

Step 3: Do not—I repeat, NOT—expend limited party resources on lesbian-bondage strip clubs. No, not even the good ones, not even on Monday nights when the drinks are half-off. This is my clearly stated position on the matter—always has been, always will be.

Step 4: If for some reason compliance with Step 3 is impossible, at least pay cash! People, this one's not difficult!

Step 5: Buy my book, *Right Now*, right now! It's a 12-step action plan for defeating the Obamagenda!

Step 6: Economic recovery—not later, but right now. *Right Now!* Oh, there I go again. But don't forget: the economy!

Step 7: Improve the education system! I mean, duh!

Step 8: Donate \$50 to the Republican National Committee at least once a month! We're down something like \$10 million in just the past two years! Cash strongly preferred.

Step 9: Listen up, because this one's important. Always tuck in your shirt. You know, it really doesn't have to be a formal shirt. It doesn't have to have platinum cufflinks. It may just be a T-shirt. It may be a tank top, a "wife-beater" (a name I personally find offensive). But tuck it in. In like Flynn. That's what my mother taught me, and it was crucial to Reagan's success. Did he ever give a State of the Union address untucked? Didn't think so!

And there you have it, my 12-step action plan. To ward off the Obamapocalypse!

Mr. Steele?

What up?

That's only nine steps. What about the other three steps of your action plan?

Look, I'm on a roll, don't spoil my juice.

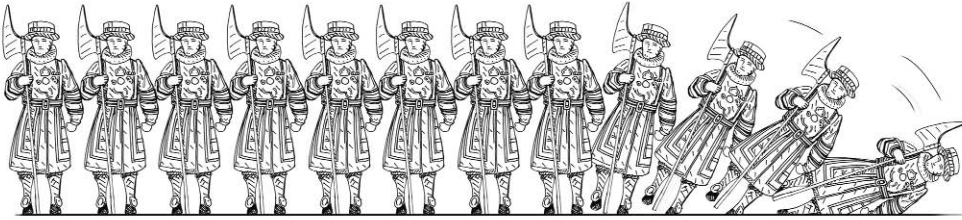
But you—

Don't spoil my juice, bro! [*Pause*] To be quite honest, I am sick and tired of being held to a higher standard just because I'm not another white guy. It's sad, but it's true.

But—

Don't spoil my juice! Now if you'll excuse me, I have a book to promote. *Right Now!* No pun intended. And hello, a political party to run? Don't forget to put that last part in. ■

Michael Steele is the chairman of the Republican National Committee. Chase Madar is a lawyer in New York City.



Plum Crazy

It is 35 years since P.G. Wodehouse died, and his reputation is as secure as ever. There was a time, however, about 70 years ago, when some really rather powerful

people in my country—among them Quintin Hogg, a future Lord Chancellor—thought Wodehouse should hang. Not for his writing, you understand, but for his “treason.”

In 1934, Wodehouse had moved to Le Touquet, in France, to escape the attention of the tax authorities in Britain and the United States. He remained there after the outbreak of war—apparently unwilling to have his dog face quarantine in England—and in 1940 was arrested and interned by the Germans. He subsequently made five radio broadcasts from Berlin to his American fans. There were howls of fury on the home front. He was denounced by the foreign secretary, Anthony Eden, and Southport Public Library removed 90 of his books from their shelves.

Wodehouse was later stoutly defended by George Orwell and Evelyn Waugh, and MI5 decided that he had been guilty of nothing more serious than naivety. But things looked bleak at the end of the war, and Wodehouse did not return to England but moved to the United States, where he remained until his death in 1975. He became an American citizen in 1955.

Perhaps there is some subliminal guilt here about Sir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse—he was knighted six weeks before he died—because he is held in what to me seems like ridiculously high esteem. The word “genius” is sometimes used. There is even, it has been said, something Shakespearean about his work.

You can lose your footing in polite society if you let it be known that you

don’t think much of Wodehouse. Not to love Wodehouse—“Plum”—is a sure sign that you are a ruffian and almost certainly damned. I just don’t get it. I first tried Wodehouse about 50 years ago, at school, and was driven back by the whimsy and possibly also by the funny names, which are not always funny. “Gussie Fink-Nottle” isn’t. Nor are “Tuppy Glossop,” “Percy Frobisher Pilbeam,” or “Pongo Twistleton.”

There is obviously something missing in me: the Jeeves and Bertie Wooster gene. Just about everyone I like likes Wodehouse. Friends don’t understand when I confess that I am not amused. I have had frosty looks. Even in America it might be unwise to express indifference to Wodehouse. I would hesitate to do so, for example, in the presence of Roger Kimball, who regards Wodehouse’s work as “sublime.” “No writer has given me more merriment and delight,” Mr. Kimball has written. Plum is also very popular in India and, or so I have heard, in Japan, where no doubt he makes people grin.

Look, I am not saying that Wodehouse was not sometimes funny. Clearly he was. This is funny:

“Oh, Bertie, you know your Shelley.”

“Am I?”

But funny is all it is. The only point of his jokes was to make people laugh. There was no malice in the man. There was in Evelyn Waugh, but Waugh not only defended Wodehouse, he worshipped him, deferred to him. He was so extravagant in his praise that you sometimes wonder whether he was making a

cruel joke against Wodehouse. But no, he meant it when he declared, “One has to regard a man as a Master who can produce on average three uniquely brilliant and entirely original similes to every page.” It seems to have bewildered Plum, and it certainly bewilders me. Waugh is the master, the genius. Wodehouse was undoubtedly a fine craftsman, but he was too busy writing books—96 in all—to be a genius.

In a fit of journalistic integrity I bought *Right Ho, Jeeves* before writing this column, but even though I read quite a bit of it, I was unable to find any brilliant and entirely original similes in its pages. At one point an angry Aunt Dahlia looks “like a tomato struggling for self-expression” (not bad); at another she shies “like a startled mustang” (not good). That sort of stuff goes down agreeably enough, but brilliant and entirely original it is not.

What, then, do his fans like, simile-wise? Here is an example you find turning up time and again: “He was white and shaken, like a dry martini.” No, he wasn’t. If he was white and shaken, he was like a vanilla milkshake, but that would have been regarded as pedestrian and would have driven readers away. They’d have been off, as they say in Australia, like a bride’s nightie.

But here’s something that makes me feel a little sad, even guilty. I used to love Damon Runyon, who as a creator of unreal worlds has much in common with P.G. Wodehouse. Mind you, I started reading Runyon about the time I first picked up Wodehouse, and think it might be unwise to try him again. *Guys and Dolls* might not seem as fresh today as it did 50 years ago. I’ll stick with Evelyn Waugh, master of comedy and tragedy. And Carl Hiaasen. ■

Myth of a Catholic Crisis

The truth about “pedophile priests”

By Philip Jenkins

IS THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH a cover for the world's largest criminal sex ring? Over the past few months, a steady stream of news stories seems to have confirmed the bleakest possible vision of global conspiracy, the most extreme claims of anticlerical propaganda through the ages. Even moderate commentators are writing as if priests around the world have taken secret vows of conspiracy, perversion, and *omertà*. Worse, this deviance is allegedly built into the church's structures of command and control. According to the darkest visions, clergy are almost encouraged to pursue careers of abuse and pedophilia, secure in the knowledge that their crimes will be sheltered by fellow molesters in the hierarchy, all the way to the Vatican itself, with Pope Benedict as the boss of all bosses. Suddenly, even the rants of Maureen Dowd and Katha Pollitt appear almost plausible.

If all this seems far-fetched, it is. Sexual abuse by clergy is a reality, and a real problem demands a response. But the problem is vastly different from that described so enthusiastically by the media, and most of the critical measures have already been taken.

Although the alleged crisis is now being portrayed in global terms, I will focus on the U.S. experience because this is by far the most intensely studied aspect. The American abuse scandal, now a quarter-century old, has produced rock-solid quantitative evidence that allows us to make general statements about abuse by clergy and to dispel myths.

Most tellingly, we can say one thing quite confidently, however strongly it goes against prevailing wisdom: there is no credible evidence that Roman Catholic clergy abuse young people at a rate different from that of clergy of any other denomination or from members of secular professions who deal with children. If anyone believes that such evidence exists, the burden is upon him to present it.

By far the best quantitative evidence derives from the survey carried out by John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York in 2004, entitled “The Nature and Scope of the Problem of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States.” Specifically, it examined all plausible complaints of sexual abuse by U.S. clergy between 1950 and 2002, a cohort of around 100,000 men. Although this study was sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the researchers were independent, and the final report was widely praised.

By social science standards, this was an impressively thorough study, and the sample size was immense. Obviously, the John Jay researchers failed to detect many cases, including those that had not come to light by 2004, and other acts that would never be reported. But they worked hard to compensate for such omissions by using a strikingly low standard of proof for the allegations that were known. Investigators counted all charges “not withdrawn or known to be false,” and total exoneration is a very high standard. The list thus includes allegations that would not have surfaced

except in the furor of 2002-03, following the dreadful scandals in the Boston Archdiocese.

A couple of points leap out about the allegations, particularly about the image of the “pedophile priest” pursuing his decades-long career of crime under the de facto protection of the Church. The John Jay study concluded that in this period, perhaps 4.5 percent of all U.S. priests had been plausibly accused of at least one act of sexual misconduct with a minor. But of the 4,392 accused priests, almost 56 percent faced only one misconduct allegation, and at least some of these would certainly vanish under detailed scrutiny.

Very few of the accused priests were pedophiles, in the sense of having abused a minor under the age of puberty, say 12 or 13 for a boy. In the U.S. at least, the great majority of cases of sexual misconduct by priests involve older boys, often aged between 15 and 17, or even older. This behavior is illegal, harmful, and sinful, but it is not pedophilia. The technical name for this kind of act is ephebophilia, but many would call it pederasty or even homosexuality. Drawing this distinction certainly does not excuse or minimize the behavior, but it is critically important for understanding the statistics. Pedophiles are compulsive offenders who are highly likely to repeat their acts, often claiming hundreds of victims. The fact that true pedophile priests formed such a minority of offenders meant that the overall number of victims was mercifully far smaller than it might have been.

Pedophile priests certainly did exist, but in tiny numbers. At the heart of the clergy abuse crisis was a core of highly persistent serial pedophiles, who massively “over-produced” criminal behavior, and some were the targets of hundreds of plausible complaints. Out of 100,000 priests active in the U.S. in this half-century, a cadre of just 149 individuals—one priest out of every 750—accounted for over a quarter of all the allegations of clergy abuse. These 149 super-predators also explain the surprisingly large number of very young victims that the study reported. The average age of offenders for the whole era has been gravely distorted by counting the sizable number of child victims assaulted by these reprehensible serial pedophiles.

Nor was clerical misconduct a persistent or steady-state phenomenon, as we would expect if abusive behavior resulted inevitably from the agonies of the celibate lifestyle. In the U.S. at least, recorded malfeasance was quite rare until an explosion of criminal activity in one short period, namely between 1975 and 1980. These six years accounted for an astonishing 40 percent of all the alleged acts of clerical abuse for the 52-year period under examination. Just why these years were so horrific is open to debate, but there seems to have been a sharp decline in the moral and disciplinary controls that higher authorities exercised over priests. Also, clergy in the 1970s were vulnerable to powerful social pressures encouraging sexual experimentation, the sense that old injunctions against adultery or pederasty were destined to perish in the new age of ethical relativism, and some priests succumbed to temptation. Of the priests ordained in the year 1970, a startling 10 percent would ultimately be the focus of abuse allegations. But the crisis was a byproduct of a specific historical era, not of some essential quality of the clerical status or of the Church’s structures.

Let’s put all this in context. In any given year between 1950 and 2002, the Catholic Church in the United States averaged around 50,000 priests, serving 45 to 55 million members. Assuming all the charges reported by the Jay study were true, then each year, an average of around 200 children were abused or molested by priests nationwide. Obviously, given what we know about the under-reporting of molestation, that figure must be a gross underestimate, and even if it was not, the problem would still be appalling: 200 instances of priestly victimization is 200 too many. But the documented evidence for clerical crime is far less extensive than is widely believed. Even in the overheated and litigious atmosphere following the Boston scandals, the Jay study reported no allegations against 24 priests out of every 25.

OUT OF 100,000 PRIESTS ACTIVE IN THE U.S. IN THIS HALF-CENTURY, A CADRE OF JUST 149 INDIVIDUALS—ONE PRIEST OUT OF EVERY 750—ACCOUNTED FOR OVER A QUARTER OF ALL THE ALLEGATIONS OF CLERGY ABUSE.

To say that X percent of Catholic priests might have engaged in abuse or molestation might be troubling, but the figure is meaningless unless we can compare it with some other group. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that we could say confidently that priests abuse at a rate 10 or 100 times larger than Presbyterian ministers or Jewish rabbis or than the male population as a whole. Then we could begin to seek the roots of the Catholic problem, whether we located them in the fact of celibacy or in the secretive clerical subculture. Unfortunately, we have not the slightest point of comparison with any other group. As a result of the furious investigations of the past decades, and particularly the Jay study, the U.S. Catholic clergy are

now the only major group on the planet that has ever been subjected to such a detailed examination of abuse complaints, using internal evidence that could not have come to light in any other way. Nothing vaguely comparable exists for other groups, for Presbyterian pastors or Lutheran clergy or, indeed, journalists.

Actually, that is not entirely true. Before commenting on the priestly situation, any observer should read the writings of Professor Charol Shakeshaft of Virginia Commonwealth University, who for years has been studying sexual and physical abuse by America’s public-school teachers. The volume of misconduct she reports is staggering and far exceeds the rate of documented abuse by Catholic clergy. Hard to imagine, public schools sometimes deal with their problem faculty by quietly transfer-

ring them to other institutions without warning the new employers of the dangers they face. It sounds a lot like the worst charges against Catholic dioceses, doesn’t it? Thank heaven we don’t worry too much about the sexual dangers facing our children in the schools, or else we might have to think seriously about this issue.

So if Catholic priests are no worse than other professions in this regard—and maybe a lot better—why do we hear so much about them being abusers? Several reasons explain this focus, none of which necessarily reflect any anti-Catholic bias in courts or media. By far the most important factor involves the way in which cases come to light, which is through civil litigation. An individual

accuses a particular priest of abuse, and quite possibly, the charge is perfectly true. Lawyers then use that case as a means of forcing a diocese to disclose ever more information about past charges against other priests, which might date back into the 1940s or '50s and which can also lead into other jurisdictions. One case thus becomes the

years ago. Even today, Catholic churches are still trying desperately to defend their actions in the distant past, when social attitudes to child sexual abuse were radically different from what we today regard as normal. In those bygone years, molestation was trivialized in both expert and public opinion, and offenders were commonly treated with kid gloves.

refer to acts alleged to have occurred since 1990. Yet litigation resulting from earlier eras means that "pedophile priests" remain in the news almost daily, and that fact shapes (and mis-shapes) popular stereotypes.

Europe is not the U.S., and it is difficult to generalize across countries within Europe. Legal systems differ, as do social assumptions and sexual attitudes. Theoretically, it is possible to imagine that in some particular nation, the Catholic clergy became so vicious and corrupted that they preyed systematically on the young and conspired to hide their misdeeds. But any awareness of the American situation, and the florid mythology it has produced, must make us very careful about giving credence to any such nightmare interpretation. ■

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH SUFFERS ACUTELY FROM ITS PACK-RAT CHARACTER, OF BEING A HIGHLY BUREAUCRATIC INSTITUTION THAT PRIDES ITSELF ON PRESERVING RECORDS OF INSTITUTIONAL CONTINUITY.

basis for a whole network of interlocking investigations, which proceed *ad infinitum*. The Catholic Church suffers acutely from its pack-rat character, of being a highly bureaucratic institution that prides itself on preserving records of institutional continuity.

In contrast, imagine a charge against a Baptist or Pentecostal minister, who has no such institutional framework and little institutional memory, whose church has no deep pockets, so that the case begins and ends with him. Not to pick on any particular denomination, but stories of abuse by clergy of all sorts surfaced regularly through the 1990s, until most groups became massively more proactive in preventing and detecting abuse threats. Partly the new vigilance reflected intensified consciousness of threats to children, but at least as significant were the demands of insurance companies: either you adopt stringent new policies to safeguard minors, or kiss your liability protection goodbye. That was an offer no church could reasonably refuse.

For Catholics, though, with their distinctive structural set-up, the new environment offered no protection from old allegations that continued to surface, often involving alleged acts from 40 or 50

Only the Catholic Church, however, is held to account for the decisions it took in this very different world of so long ago. Only the Catholic Church is subjected to the unforgiving standards of 20/20 hindsight.

Catholics, like other denominations, have made massive progress in preventing abuse by clergy. In the U.S. at least, very few of the cases that have come to public attention in the past few years

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Thailand Runs Red

Demonstrators claiming democracy's mantle threaten the centuries of stability monarchy has provided.

By Jim Pittaway

STANDING ON BANGKOK'S Sukhumvit Road last month, I watched the cavalcade of Red Shirt demonstrators on their way to dump hundreds of gallons of blood at the entrance to the prime minister's home. Aside from a few pedestrians who watched with transparent sadness and anxiety, everyone was at least pretending to have a great time. But it was clear, even at that point, that the Red Shirts were not there to make friends or negotiate; their list of demands would be met or they would have to be forcibly removed.

Any talk of organized political factions identifying themselves by the color of their shirts and hitting the streets in the name of an iconic, misunderstood, and persecuted leader should make Westerners—of a certain age and experience, at least—uneasy. In the case of Thailand's insurgent Red Shirts and their rivals, the pro-government Yellow Shirts, apprehension would not be misplaced. The behavior of the Red Shirt leader, exiled Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, reeks of demagoguery. He and his rivals personify political immaturity and irresponsibility.

Perhaps because social ethics have always been the business of the monarch, Thailand's democratic institutions exist in a state of arrested development. Free and reasonably honest elections produce parliaments that pass laws and governments that administer them, giving the appearance of democratic process. But legitimacy—a matter

of identity and loyalty—resides elsewhere: in this case, with a 1,000-year-old, very Buddhist monarchical system that has somehow survived into the modern era.

We tend to think of monarchies in European terms. Are they absolute or constitutional? Does the monarch reign or rule? Although the Siamese kings had complete personal control of decisions until the 1920s, the most significant roles of the monarchy here have always been more subtle. Culturally, the monarch is the embodiment of national identity and custodian of the ritual purity necessary to sustain harmony in the complex universe of Theravada Buddhist cosmology. This is how the chaos that stalks neighboring Burma or Cambodia has been kept at bay here.

Thai people believe quite sincerely in all of this, and there's a substantial body of historical evidence that the system works. But now the monarchy is under domestic and international attack in unprecedented ways; it may indeed be failing.

Most Thai people I talked to believe that if the monarchy were functioning as it has in the past, Thailand would never have reached this level of social discord and political instability. The "shirts" are symptoms, not the cause, of this crisis. Sophisticated Thais fear that neither the West nor China understands their monarchical system or takes any interest in its preservation.

Throughout the turmoil that afflicted

the region in the decades after the end of World War II and European imperial rule, Thailand has managed to navigate treacherous waters with superb skill. One of the cognomens of Chairman Mao was "The Great Helmsman." In this part of the world, proven repeatedly over 60 turbulent years, the undisputed Great Helmsman is a quiet, gentle, wise, vastly experienced man named Bhumipol Aydulet, otherwise known as Rama IX, the ninth Chakri Dynasty King of Thailand. His personal virtues have undergirded one of the few remaining indigenously legitimate systems of state to survive the twin Western plagues of imperialist rapacity and communist vandalism.

An anecdote will perhaps illumine the depth of anxiety in the psyche of Thais who fear for the monarchy. In the late '80s, I watched the film "The Last Emperor" in a Bangkok theater. The movie depicts the compelling personal tragedy of Pu Yi, the last emperor of China, who was overthrown in 1911 and wound up as a Japanese puppet-prince in the doomed creation called Manchukuo. The story had a real meaning for Thais, who are well aware of the horrors that befell their Chinese cousins as the delusion-ridden Imperial court gave way to an unrelenting sequence of disasters—war, economic collapse, famine, plagues, tyranny, and vicious repression of a scale and duration inconceivable to Western sensibilities. Thais know that their kings responded realistically, even proactively, to the rise of

Western and Japanese power, and their system persisted without any serious disruption.

The moviegoers knew about Ne Win's lunatic "Burmese Way to Socialism" next door and the Cambodian holocaust on the other side. The people of Laos and Vietnam, trapped in tyranny and living in the rubble of devastating war, seemed to be the best off of the neighbors. Thais I spoke with left that movie feeling good about themselves and even better about their beloved Rama IX. It's been an impressive run. But Rama IX is 82 and ill. His successor, the crown prince, is clearly a problem, and opportunists like Thaksin abound.

Part of the mystery of the monarchy is sustained by taboos that are often misunderstood by Westerners. One concerns speaking about the king or royal family as ordinary humans. You do not discuss the king's illnesses, speculate on his death—or its aftermath—and you certainly do not gossip. But the behavior of the 57-year-old crown prince over the last several decades has obliterated that last prohibition. Stories depict a willful, rage-filled sociopath, the utter antithesis of his father. They are far too consistent not to be believed; the negative perception is nearly universal.

Uncertainties surrounding this inevitable transition have festered for decades, yet no solution has emerged. There has been talk about naming as successor the oldest royal sister, whose behavior fits traditional expectations, but it is perhaps too late. For the first time in 250 years, men of ambition can see wiggle room at the top. The potential candidates for Thailand's new Nasser, Sukarno, or Idi Amin are legion—and are just as vicious and unprincipled. Thaksin invokes the language of democracy and social justice, but the prospect of his acquisition of personal power, by any available means, is what his Red Shirt movement is all about.

The multibillionaire former prime minister is one of several elected officials who made fortunes in the grey areas between governance and business when Asia's Little Tigers were booming. These men emerged as leaders of regional business/political/administrative alliances, playing musical chairs as governments came and went, always positioning themselves to ensure that enormous infrastructure contracts went to their partners and allies. The system is definitionally democratic; representatives are elected. But they are essentially regional or class-based economic warlords with gigantic amounts of money and large organizations rather than vicious little armies deployed to promote their ambitions.

Until now. As we go to press, the Red Shirts are growing increasingly militant, and have succeeded in crippling large sections of Bangkok for more than a month. At \$70 a head—\$240 if you bring a vehicle—renewable as needed, the revolutionaries are, by rural Thai standards, very well paid. And the financial ability of Thaksin and his allies to keep a 30,000-strong cadre disrupting the capital is nearly unlimited.

In tandem with menacing social peace, Thaksin has no scruples about extending his threat into spiritual realms. Without getting into the animist implications of ritual contamination, dumping thousands of gallons of human blood on the thresholds of Parliament and the homes of politicians is a particularly dirty tactic and a direct challenge to the monarchy's ability to sustain ceremonial purity. The closest analogue comprehensible to Americans might be the point in Hurricane Katrina when coffins began popping to the surface. Most everyone who saw that felt, metaphysically, that this was no longer just a mess. Suddenly something profoundly disturbing had been loosed. But at least this was not done

by an individual in ruthless pursuit of his personal agenda.

In thrall to delusional ambition, Thaksin disrespects everything that has made Thailand work so well for so long. Given his methods, it's hard to buy into any of the supposed virtues of his program, as many Western observers do. There are undoubtedly severe social and economic inequities in Thailand, but anyone who thinks this is really about that is not paying very close attention to Thaksin and knows nothing of the history of peasant violence in this part of the world. It's as patronizingly clueless as a parent fussing over bad table manners while junior sits there smoking a crack pipe.

Neither Thaksin nor his rivals are likely to deliver salvation through democracy. They have built their careers inflaming regional and class-based divisions. The monarchy has always been there—by collective consent—to keep everything from getting out of hand. But if its legitimacy falters, civil order will only be maintained through repression. This country that has been a haven for countless refugees and a delight for millions of visitors could soon find itself—as its neighbors have—in unspeakable travail.

To stanch the bloodletting, the Thai government may feel that it has to give in to Thaksin in the short term. It is playing a difficult hand badly. But reinstating him would only motivate his many imitators and rivals who are entirely prepared to engage in identical tactics. Retributive violence could quickly spin out of control.

The clampdown required to stop such chaos would be severe, and the Thai people, having never experienced a heavy hand, would probably test the limits, creating a genuine human-rights disaster. Western governments would predictably go ballistic, establishing sanctions and other punishments, but—

as in Burma—would have no impact on the people making the decisions. Hillary Clinton has weighed in, arbitrarily enjoining both sides to resolve this “peacefully.” Such comments are gratuitous when one side is trying desperately to avoid violence and the other is determined to provoke it, and they tend to reduce, if not nullify, the ability of responsible, pro-Western Thai leaders to influence events.

Legitimate institutions are forged over time as culture and belief systems, interacting with events and personalities, produce identity, consensus, and stability. When these underpinnings of civil order fail or are destroyed, they tend to be very difficult to reconstruct—especially from oceans away. And regional actors aren’t without interests of their own. Thaksin is unpopular with China, which has repeatedly demonstrated it has no time for political figures in its bailiwick braying about democracy to secure Western support. And the PRC is well aware of the threat posed by cycles of peasant violence. It is not in its political or economic interests for the turmoil promoted by Thaksin to engulf a prosperous neighbor.

I recall a conversation over 20 years ago with MR Tongnoi Tongyai, secretary to the king. We were talking about Burma and activist Aung San Su Kiy, then as now under house arrest. He noted, “These democracy and human rights people think the PRC is the devil. They will get nowhere with that attitude.”

The West may have an interest in installing its institutions in Thailand, but the devil wants a quiet neighbor. At this point, after weeks of upheaval, and with the prospect of more to come, many Thais surely crave the same thing. ■

Jim Pittaway is a licensed psychotherapist. He resides and practices in Missoula, Montana.

The National Intelligence Estimate is the supreme analytical document produced for Washington policymakers, reflecting the consensus of the 16 separate agencies that make up the intelligence community. NIEs can address a country, a topic such as drug trafficking or arms proliferation, or a specific issue within a country. They do not, however, spring up spontaneously. Rather, they have to be requested by a consumer, most often the White House but sometimes Congress or the Pentagon, and have to be approved by the National Intelligence Council. Selecting what or where gets written up is a highly politicized procedure as, by definition, NIEs are supposed to address “key national security concerns.” The most notorious NIE ever was the 2002 Iraq report that got nearly everything wrong about Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction and was used to justify invading and occupying that unhappy land.

Currently the National Security Council, acting on behalf of the White House, is embroiled in controversy over three NIEs, one of which is underway and two of which have been proposed. The one pending, on Iran, is the thorniest, and has been in progress for nearly a year. It was originally planned for the summer of 2009, but that deadline slipped to the autumn, and has now been prorogued yet again. The problem is that the analysts involved do not want to get burned a la Iraq 2002 and are “red teaming” to challenge every bit of information. The Obama administration would like to have a free hand on Iranian policy, which depends on an NIE that strongly suggests that Tehran might be hellbent on producing a nuclear weapon. But the analysts can find no evidence that is the case, so they keep going back to the drawing board. They are also struggling with the lack of any good intelligence on Iran’s decision-making process and how the mullahs’ government actually works. They note ruefully that 30 years of intensive spying on Iran by CIA has not produced any insights into the issues that should concern Washington, including Tehran’s capabilities and intentions.

The two proposed NIEs are on Israel and Venezuela. It is noteworthy that a report on Israel is even being suggested by the White House. This would have been inconceivable even one year ago. But that NIE is likely to be still-born as there is no way to deal fairly with the national security implications of the West Bank settlements and Tel Aviv’s nukes without running into a firestorm from Congress and the media. Venezuela was the subject of an NIE back in the 1970s but not since Hugo Chavez appeared. Several Florida congressmen with ties to the Cuban exile community are pushing for a new NIE, knowing that it will demonstrate that Chavez is tied to two terrorist groups, FARC in Colombia and ETA in Spain, making him a state sponsor of terrorism. The White House is attempting to block the Venezuela NIE because Chavez would undoubtedly react by freezing the 11 percent of imported U.S. energy that comes from Venezuela, creating an instant gas price shock that would be very bad for the 2010 elections.

Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a fellow with the American Conservative Defense Alliance.

The Trouble With T-Bills

How our last export industry might bankrupt us

By Charles Hugh Smith

KEYNESIANS CEASELESSLY claim that huge deficits are not just necessary to reboot the economy, they are essentially harmless. And the bond market's acceptance of 2009's unprecedented deficit of \$1.4 trillion seems to justify their complacency. Indeed, since the Federal Reserve is committed to maintaining a zero interest rate policy, then the consequences of borrowing trillions and trillions seem modest.

But the "new normal" of trillion-dollar deficits does pose potentially interesting questions: Will this vast issuance of new debt ever exceed demand? What happens if buyers of all this low-yield debt become scarce?

The usual response is that global and domestic investors can never get enough of U.S. Treasury bonds because they are liquid—that is, easy to buy and sell—and are safe, backed by the full faith and credit of the U.S. government.

But Treasury debt, like all other bonds, has two funny characteristics the Keynesians either dismiss or ignore: the government has to pay interest on that debt, and the bond market, not the Fed, sets the interest rates on Treasury bonds.

In actuality, the Fed has only a few levers to pull in controlling interest rates. It sets the Federal Funds Target Rate for interbank lending and recently it has taken to buying mortgages and Treasury bonds directly to keep those rates low. But the ultimate arbiter of Treasury yields is the global bond market, not the Federal Reserve.

If buyers don't snap up bonds with low yields, then the yield has to rise to

the point that buyers are enticed to step in. If buyers become scarce, then the interest rate rises, and the federal government has to pay more interest.

Why do we care? For the same reason that the Keynesians suddenly fall silent when the topic of interest rates comes up: rising rates on trillions of dollars of debt would obligate the government to pay a lot more interest than it currently does. That would squeeze spending on other programs and raise interest rates throughout the economy, rippling into mortgages, corporate bonds, credit cards, and other consumer lending.

The Keynesians also never mention what happens to real estate and the stock and bond markets when rates rise: like all interest-sensitive markets, they tank. Real estate tanks because mortgage rates and prices are on a see-saw: when rates rise, prices must drop to maintain the same monthly "nut" (mortgage payment). Stocks tank because investors prefer the safety of high-yielding bonds to risky low-yield stocks. The market for existing long-term bonds also tanks because the market value of a bond is inverse to the yield: when rates fall, long-term bonds at high yields rise in value, and when rates rise, then long-term bonds with low yields plummet. If you can get 8 percent on a new bond today, who wants a bond paying 4 percent for ten years? Answer: nobody, unless the price of the bond falls by half, effectively boosting its yield to 8 percent.

So That Which Cannot Be Spoken among Keynesians is this: borrowing insanely large amounts of money at low

yields boosts the odds that buyers will eventually hesitate, which will then drive rates higher, with dire consequences to the asset classes noted above.

In the popular imagination, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke's fanciful imagery of helicopters strewing bundles of freshly printed cash over the parched recessionary landscape explains where the government's deficit funding comes from: when it needs more money, it just prints it.

But if it were that easy, why does the Treasury go through all the trouble of selling bonds? Because ours is a credit-based system. The federal government does not just print \$100 bills to fund its stupendous deficit. It sells bonds of varying maturities and yields, and investors holding a bond to maturity get their money back—with interest.

To fund the \$3 trillion deficit of the past two years, the Treasury has had to sell \$3 trillion in new bonds. At the same time, it has also had to replace ("roll over") all the existing bonds that reached maturity in those years. As the old saw has it, a trillion here, a trillion there, and pretty soon you're talking real money.

But who's buying these bonds? For reasons of little interest to anyone but economists and policy wonks, the Treasury has had little trouble finding buyers for those trillions of dollars of new bonds. But as the Wall Street caveat goes, past performance is not a guide to future results, and there are legitimate reasons to ask if buyers of low-yield bonds will always be so abundant.

In 2007, China soaked up about 75 percent of all Treasury bonds issued in 2007. During the Bush deficit years, the Chinese were pleased to buy about \$890 billion of Treasury debt. The reason isn't complex: we ran massive trade deficits with China, and they had to park their huge surpluses of dollars somewhere. Treasuries were low-risk and liquid, and buying them helped keep interest rates in America low so consumers could continue extracting home equity to buy Chinese goods.

Recently, the Chinese have become circumspect about buying Treasuries, and their statements have been backed up by action: they've been lightening their load of T-Bills. Some of this is the result of lower trade surpluses. They have fewer dollars to park. But they also seem rather keen on trading their dollars for things like oilfields in Africa rather than T-Bills.

At this juncture, it is helpful to place the \$1.56 trillion 2010 deficit in context. According to the most recent statistics issued by the Treasury, China holds \$889 billion and Japan holds \$765 billion. That comes to \$1.65 trillion. So to fund the current year's deficit, both China and Japan would have to nearly double their Treasury holdings in just one year. Since both have stopped adding to their gigantic hoards, that seems unlikely. Even if China were to convert its entire trade surplus with the U.S. into T-Bills, the \$227 billion 2009 surplus is only 14.5 percent of the 2010 deficit.

How about those rich oil-exporting nations? They have continued buying modest quantities of Treasury debt, increasing their holdings to \$218.4 billion in January from \$207.4 billion in December 2009. (Whoopie, a big \$11 billion!) But even if those countries doubled their holdings in 2010, the additional \$218 billion would only cover 14 percent of the U.S. deficit.

So forget non-U.S. buyers. Can't we fund the deficit with domestic purchases

of Treasuries? The evidence is not very promising. In a recent *Newsweek* piece entitled "Empire at Risk," historian Niall Ferguson stated that American investors were net sellers of Treasuries in the second quarter of 2009, and that bond mutual funds bought \$142 billion Treasuries, and pension funds and insurance companies together purchased a mere \$22 billion. That \$164 billion is roughly 10.5 percent of the 2010 deficit.

But aren't Americans saving more now? True, but the deficit completely dwarfs U.S. households' newfound thrift. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, our savings rate jumped to 4.3 percent in 2009 from a profligate 1.7 percent in 2007, with Americans stashing \$471 billion in 2009 compared to \$178 billion in 2007. Even if every dollar saved by all 130 million U.S. households were put into Treasuries, that would only soak up 30 percent of the 2010 deficit.

You see where this is going. There don't appear to be enough foreign or domestic buyers to absorb the \$1.56 trillion in Treasury bonds needed to fund the 2010 deficit. No wonder Morgan Stanley's analysts have concluded that there could be a shortfall in demand for \$598 billion later this year.

Ferguson noted that the Federal Reserve was a major buyer in 2009, and presumably the Fed will continue acting as the "buyer of last resort." But as political scrutiny of the Fed's secretive actions intensifies, it doesn't take much imagination to foresee that the Fed's role as savior of soaring trillion-dollar deficits may be questioned and eventually curtailed.

Even if the Fed sopped up a staggering \$500 billion in T-Bills, and domestic buyers snapped up another \$500 billion, that still leaves \$560 billion of new bonds to sell, plus the billions of dollars of maturing bonds that have to be rolled over into new debt. And let's suppose

that by heroic efforts, the entire 2010 \$1.56 trillion deficit is taken up without a murmur. Then the Treasury will have to gear up to sell 2011's trillion-dollar deficit.

Budgets released by wishful thinkers in the White House forecast a reduction in future deficits, but there is little evidence of the powerful economic boom and rising tax revenues that would be required to reduce structural federal deficits.

What if investors sell other assets to put the cash into Treasuries? According to the BEA, U.S. households have a net worth of about \$52.9 trillion, down from \$63.9 trillion in 2007—a decline of \$11 trillion. About \$33 trillion of these assets are financial (stocks, bonds, and other securities) and \$20 trillion are business and real estate assets. Stock holdings account for about \$11.3 trillion.

Since the 2009 and 2010 deficits alone require almost \$3 trillion in new Treasury debt, a few more years of trillion-plus dollar deficits will quickly reach the once unimaginable sum of \$10 trillion. So what happens to the market value of assets such as stocks or real estate if there is massive sell off to raise trillions to buy T-Bills? The value of those assets would fall dramatically—it's simple supply and demand.

The scenario few are willing to entertain is also a function of supply and demand: if the Treasury has to constantly raise rates to entice buyers, the interest paid by the government could quickly devour a major chunk of the federal budget. And what then? Either spending is cut or taxes are raised.

Stupendous deficits have pernicious consequences. We accept the Keynesian fantasy at our peril. ■

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How Liberals Kill

Harold Koh learns to love bomb power.

By Chase Madar

AT THE END OF MARCH, Harold Koh, top lawyer at the State Department, used his keynote address at the annual confab of the American Society for International Law to make an announcement: the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles to kill suspected terrorists is legal. The drone strikes in Pakistan and Afghanistan are lawful because, Koh delineated, they are done only in national self-defense, their proportionality is always precisely calibrated, and they carefully discriminate civilians from combatants.

There's both more and less to it than that, but the legal argument itself is of minor importance. What matters is that Koh said it. Harold Hongju Koh: renowned human rights advocate; leading theorist of international law (which, the ASIL conventioners would happily have told you, is much more civilized than mere national law); until last year dean of Yale Law School and therefore unofficial pope of the American legal system, and former director of the school's Orville H. Schell Jr. Center for International Human Rights; Obama appointee accused by Glenn Beck and likeminded screamers of wanting to smuggle Sharia law into U.S. courts. All of which is to say, if a liberal lion like Harold Koh says drone strikes are lawful, what more do you need to know?

Koh's lecture—warmly applauded by the conventioners—demonstrates once again the amazing elasticity of international law when it comes to the prerogatives of great powers. Koh's lecture also demonstrates the accommo-

dating suppleness of several international lawyers who, once strong critics of George W. Bush's anti-terror policies, now see things differently from inside the Obama administration.

For Harold Koh had been one of the strongest and most prestigious voices raised against the post-9/11 policies of Bush and Cheney. From his throne at Yale Law, he inveighed against the unlawful use of torture, against the unlawful invasion of Iraq, against the unlawful detentions at Guantanamo. (He has argued that the U.S. risks a permanent spot on the "axis of disobedience" for its chronic flouting of international law.) If it had been W. intensifying the drone strikes in Central Asia, one can easily imagine Koh condemning this practice as another brazen violation of international law. What happened?

It was inevitable that Koh would dutifully come up with legal rationales for whatever the Obama administration decided to do. Part of this is the nature of his job; part of it is to be found plainly written in his own scholarship.

First, running the Legal Advisor's Office at the U.S. State Department does not mean full freedom of action. In the words of the late international law eminence Tom Franck, at State the legal culture "is that of the defense counsel when it finds ways to justify, post hoc, the client's actions, rather than that of an expert advising the client to choose the best legally-permissible course of action." In short, the primary function of State Department lawyers is to come up with legal rationalizations that can pass

the smell test. On some small issues, they may have a policy role, but on the big issues—making war, use of drones, setting up prisons outside the reach of any law—their voice is faint, even negligible. Liberals who expected that Harold Koh, the scourge of waterboarding, would bring a human rights sensibility to major foreign-policy issues were going to be disappointed.

Then there is Koh himself. He gained fame in lefty circles for his work to free and grant legal-immigrant status to Haitian refugees warehoused at Guantanamo—yes, it's been a detention camp before—in the early '90s. But Koh's foreign-policy views and opinion of America's rightful role in the world fit snugly into the Beltway consensus. Israel and Palestine? According to Koh, America was an honest broker in this conflict until Bush and Cheney disengaged in 2001, "with consequences akin to removing adult supervision from a playground populated by warring switchblade gangs." One might question the aptness of this metaphor since America gives \$3 billion dollars a year in military aid to one of these "switchblade gangs," a patronage relationship that, in the eyes of the world and the parties in conflict, has always disqualified us from being neutral arbiters.

As for Afghanistan, like most international jurists Koh barely bothered to justify the 2001 invasion as a no-brainer exercise of legitimate *jus ad bellum*. Wasn't Osama bin Laden there somewhere? That the 9/11 hijackers received much of their indoctrination and train-

ing in Hamburg and South Florida should not get in the way of using Afghanistan as an easy target for American vengeance and/or deep concern for the plight of oppressed Afghan women.

For Koh is a true believer both in international law and the inherent goodness of America. His quibble with the doctrine of Exceptionalism is that our reluctance to heed international law prevents us from fulfilling our exceptionally positive role to the max.

This complaisant faith in inherent American benevolence is jarringly illustrated in an anecdote recounted by Dean Judith Areen of Georgetown Law Center in her gracious introduction to Koh's keynote address. When a military coup deposed the democratic government of South Korea in 1961, Prime Minister Chang Myon was put under house arrest, his imminent execution feared. To plead for Chang's life, Koh's parents, then visiting academics in America, brought Chang's son to the deputy national security adviser in Washington. As Koh's father recalled, the official turned to the boy, told him that the U.S. knew his father's whereabouts, and assured him that he would not be harmed. This instance of America's global omniscience greatly impressed both Koh's father and Koh himself about their soon-to-be new country's reach and goodness.

The Washington official—whom Koh has fondly identified in his own retellings—was Walt W. Rostow. Dean Areen didn't name him in her introduction, as it probably wouldn't have meant anything to the lawyers seated in the Ritz-Carlton's basement: many of them were under 40, and nearly half were not American. But to a few, the selection of Walt Rostow—a primary architect of America's invasion of South Vietnam and an enthusiastic advocate for aerial attacks on North Vietnam—as an exemplar of wise and benevolent foreign

policy is deeply disconcerting. According to Rostow's former colleague Robert McNamara, secretary of defense under Kennedy and Johnson, 3.4 million people were killed in the Vietnam War, a far deadlier war than, for instance, the more recent invasion of Iraq. An intellectual who can cite Rostow as paragon of American goodwill to Asia is capable of saying anything.

Harold Koh is not the only prominent human rights lawyer to have assumed a role inside Obama's foreign-policy apparatus. Michael Posner, undersecretary of state for human rights and labor (a post previously held by Koh in the Clinton administration), has done excellent work directing the nonprofit he founded, Human Rights First. Yet so far his most significant achievement at State has been to undermine the Goldstone Report, accusing it of systematic anti-Israel bias. That Richard Goldstone himself is a self-professed Zionist with

shrugged him off as the walking tantrum that he is, but from Samantha Power the argument is just human rights with nice biceps.

No matter. That Koh & Co. are such highly accomplished human rights lawyers makes them ideally suited to spin the new administration's old policies. They command the general respect of the invisible college of international lawyers in academia, media, and the NGOs, so they are going to be far more convincing about the legality of drone attacks, military commissions, and indefinite detention than Bolton and John Yoo could ever be.

In fairness, there are some important differences between the counter-terrorism and security policies of Bush and Obama. According to detainee defense attorney Sabin Willet, Guantanamo now more resembles an archetypical POW camp than a hive of torture chambers. But the continuities are striking. At the

HAD JOHN BOLTON EXPRESSED SIMILAR SENTIMENTS, MUCH OF OUR INTELLIGENTSIA WOULD HAVE SHRUGGED HIM OFF AS THE WALKING TANTRUM THAT HE IS.

long attachments to Israel matters little. Human rights should never get in the way of protecting a client state.

Samantha Power, author of the Pulitzer-winning polemic against multilateralist constraints on military force to stop human rights abuses, now resides at the National Security Council as senior director of multilateral affairs. A human rights icon and self-dubbed "genocide chick," she is an advocate of armed intervention in the Sudanese civil war and also a longtime supporter of broadening and deepening the war in Afghanistan, urging the U.S. to be more aggressive in arm-twisting its allies into greater troop contributions. Had John Bolton expressed similar sentiments, much of our intelligentsia would have

ASIL conference, Koh's predecessor, John Bellinger, lavished sincere praise on Team Obama's wise decision to more or less preserve the Bush-Cheney policies: "The change in law has been largely cosmetic. And of course there has been no change in outcome." In international law, as with so many other elite policy fields, conservatives and liberals often seem less principled opponents than clones on parallel career tracks.

When the legal debate is over, one wonders what appeals to international law will be able to accomplish here. Although the UN Charter and various treaties and conventions have proven powerless to prevent the torture of prisoners and wars of aggression against Iraq and Afghanistan, adroit use of inter-

national law is quite handy at legitimizing the drone strikes, military commissions, and even judicious use of indefinite detention. Are debates over legality a dead end for their opponents? Since Koh's announcement of the drone strikes' legality, the American Civil Liberties Union has vowed to redouble its FOIA efforts to reveal the legal process by which targets are selected and proportionality assessed. Do they think they're going to find a flaw in the legal reasoning that will somehow convince Koh, Clinton, Obama, and Petraeus himself to roll back the operation?

our numerous wars is fully outside their mission and their competence—at times outside their tax-exempt status. But in the absence of any vital antiwar movement with clout, a lawyered-up debate over the drone strikes' legality is better than no struggle at all.

It is now easy to forget that making war is not exclusively a legal issue. Consider this: if the UN Security Council had authorized the invasion of Iraq, would this have transmuted that war into a success? And if a critical mass of international legal authorities agree that the drone assassinations of suspected ter-

quickly grown to love the drone strikes, it is still not at all difficult to find prominent military intellectuals who favor the alternative of halting the policy full stop. David Kilcullen and Andrew Exum, respectively a former adviser to General Petraeus and a former Army captain who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, are both leading theorists of counterinsurgency warfare at the Center for a New American Security. They have testified before Congress that drone strikes are perceived to be wildly inaccurate—killing, they say, 700 people in attacks on 14 targets—and are undermining the “hearts and minds” offensive that is central to the campaign. They recommend scrapping drone attacks. And then there is the American Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry, who happens to be a retired Army general. In leaked cables to the president, Eikenberry severely questioned the wisdom of the counterinsurgency campaign and the escalation in a long telegram commonly compared to the Pentagon Papers leaked by Daniel Ellsberg. Is anyone listening to these well-informed skeptics?

Don't wait for the international legal profession to prick up its collective ears. Leaked videos of bantering gunship crews fatally strafing civilians may trouble the mind, but drone strikes have been absolved by the great humanitarian authority Harold Koh. His keynote address got a few not-buying-it questions from a couple of academics—long may you live, Benjamin Davis and Mary Ellen O'Connell—but this dissonance was washed away by the warm roar of applause at session's end. A Russian corporate lawyer chum of mine was taken aback by this mellow response to a legal justification for Bush-Cheney policies. “And they say we Russians are brainwashed by our media! No, I did not clap.” ■

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IF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL HAD **AUTHORIZED THE INVASION OF IRAQ**, WOULD THIS HAVE **TRANSMUTED THAT WAR INTO A SUCCESS**?

But it is unfair to expect the Hermione Grangers of the human rights industry—Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the UN's Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Killing have also questioned Koh's rationale—to do anything else. These NGOs are well equipped to assess a policy's legality, to publicize its legal shortcomings, occasionally to litigate. But that is the limit. And in our depoliticized public culture, legality has become a flimsy proxy for everything else: prudence, effectiveness, political wisdom, morality itself.

That the use of military force might be permitted by international law and still catastrophic is difficult for even (perhaps especially) the brightest to grasp. Jürgen Habermas and Norberto Bobbio were baffled by opposition to the first Gulf War—after all, it had the authorization of the United Nations! They both recanted their support after being amazed by that war's carnage, now largely forgotten.

In the meantime, rights nonprofits and the UN should never be mistaken for antiwar groups, as political opposition to

rorists is perfectly legal, will this make the strikes any more advisable? Will it lessen the number of civilian deaths—which according to a study by the New America Foundation are one-third of the total? Will it make the whole tactic of drone strikes any less counterproductive to national security?

Kenneth Anderson, professor of law at Washington College of Law and the author of a *Weekly Standard* cover story making the case for drone strikes, praised Koh's speech and informed NPR listeners the next morning that the only alternatives are clumsier, less subtle munitions that will kill even more civilians. Anderson is one of the few neoconservatives with intellectual breadth and depth, and is always worth listening to. Here, however, he is mistaken.

There are in fact alternatives to the drone strikes, the main one being to end them. Not two years ago, John McCain was blasting Obama's pledge to launch attacks into Pakistan as foolhardy nonsense. (Where Republican hawks once feared to tread, humanitarian angels now rush in.) Though most hawks have

Divestment Diversion

Boycotting Israel will not foster peace.

By Michael C. Desch

FORMER PRESIDENT Jimmy Carter's blockbuster book *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* introduced the South Africa analogy into the discussion of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Not surprisingly, the comparison proved controversial. Even the generally balanced *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen angrily asserted, "the Israel of today and the South Africa of yesterday have almost nothing in common."

But both former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and current Defense Minister Ehud Barak have raised the specter of Israel becoming like South Africa if it does not end the occupation of the West Bank. So if the analogy holds, a logical question follows: might the international campaign against white rule in South Africa constitute a viable model for the struggle against Israel's occupation of Palestine?

Many believe that it does. Indeed, the Palestinian Civil Society manifesto that launched the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement takes its inspiration from "the struggle of South Africans against apartheid." The 1949 Arab League boycott of Israel was the forerunner of the modern BDS movement, but given its failure to achieve any of its objectives, BDS proponents are keen to find a different historical anchor. The Third World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa in September 2001 is regarded as the turning point for BDS because it linked the two movements.

In the context of the apparent failure of violent struggle in the second Intifada, 170

Palestinian civil-society groups met in July 2005 to call for a global campaign to end the occupation, elevate the second-class status of Arab citizens of Israel, and promote the right of return of Palestinian refugees from the 1948 war. A BDS National Committee was established at a conference in Ramallah in November 2007. Founding member Omar Barghouti attributes the movement's "momentous victories of late" to international outrage over Israel's 2006 war in Lebanon and the 2008/9 Gaza wars.

BDS offers a neat solution to the two major obstacles to ending the Israel-Palestine conflict: the continuing use of violence against the Jewish state by some Palestinian factions and the domestic political gridlock in Israel that gives the minority committed to Greater Israel disproportionate influence on policy. Because it is a nonviolent form of resistance, it allows the Palestinians to reclaim the moral high ground.

The flip side, as Middle East peace activist Henry Siegman reminds us, is that since "no country is as obsessed with the issue of its own legitimacy as Israel," BDS particularly stings most Israelis, who consider their country to be part of the "civilized world." Two academic supporters write, "The BDS strategy is designed not only to promote economic consequences for Israel's economy, but also, and often deemed more importantly, to disrupt hegemonic discourse that Israel is a progressive state."

The effort has touched a nerve in some quarters. The Ruet Institute, a Tel Aviv-based policy advisory organization,

warns that BDS represents "a systemic, systematic, and increasingly effective assault on [Israel's] political and economic model." In this view, "the hearts and minds of the elites—individuals with influence, leadership, or authority—represent the battleground between Israel and its foes," and BDS efforts therefore constitute an "existential threat" to the Jewish state.

But not all Israelis regard the movement as a negative development. A few remaining leftists like New Historian and human rights activist Ilan Pappé endorse it. Yet this position remains marginal and precarious, as Ben Gurion University political scientist Neve Gordon discovered last August when he wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* that a boycott "is the only way that Israel can be saved from itself" and subsequently came under withering criticism from the president of his university, among other high-profile supporters of Israel.

Two other aspects of the BDS movement make it attractive to critics of Israel's policies toward the Palestinians. First, given Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's incessant call for "harsh sanctions" against Iran for its alleged nuclear program, there is a clear symmetry with the BDS effort, which in effect hoists the current Likud government on its own petard.

Second, Israel strikes many as particularly vulnerable to economic sanctions. Sanctions expert Gary Haufbauer points to four characteristics of a state that make it susceptible: small size, democratic political system, vulnerable economy, and

close links to the West. Daniel Drezner adds another reason for optimism: those few cases in which sanctions have succeeded involved otherwise friendly countries. Israel's two largest trading partners are the European Union and the United States. Together, they account for almost 55 percent of the Jewish state's foreign trade. Moreover, because this trade makes up almost 65 percent of Israel's gross domestic product, BDS proponents regard the Jewish state as particularly vulnerable to economic sanctions.

But before we get swept up in the BDS euphoria, we ought to weigh the movement's real prospects for success. Will the boycott and divestment elements of BDS succeed in attracting a critical mass of participants? What is the likelihood that economic sanctions would change Israeli government policy? Finally, would Israel's major trade partners—the United States and the European Union—actually impose these sanctions? On all three counts, the BDS movement's optimism seems unwarranted.

Economist Philippe Delacote observes that boycotts and divestments most often fail because they cannot overcome two common obstacles to collective action: free-riding and coordination problems. Only individuals with strong commitment to the cause are willing to pay the costs of the boycott itself. This reduces the number of participants in the effort, and it also tends to skew the movement's agenda in a more extreme direction.

This explains why the BDS strategy seems ambivalent about a one- or two-state solution. As Barghouti told me, BDS “does not adopt a particular political solution of the colonial conflict.” But the fact that the Palestinian Civil Society document endorses UN Resolution 194's call for unrestricted right of return suggests that at least some parts of the movement lean in the direction of one state.

BDS proponents rightly remind us that the nation that emerged after 1949 was

much larger than UN-designated Israel. Thus their demand that the world recognize the suffering inflicted upon Palestinian refugees during the War of Independence is morally justified. But as a practical matter, anything other than a two-state solution based upon the 1967 borders, shared Jerusalem, and no right of return is a diplomatic non-starter, unlikely to garner support from otherwise moderate Israelis or most other governments.

Proponents of BDS seem to have little faith in changing government policy directly. As the Ma'an Center recounts, “Western governments were entirely supportive of the South African Apartheid regime. . . . Only when civil society groups started to take action did corporations begin to divest from South Africa, paving the way for government boycotts and sanctions.” What they forget is that BDS can only work if it leads governments to impose economic and other sanctions.

Any effort to get the United States government to impose sanctions will have to overcome a very powerful pro-Israel lobby in this country that deploys a wide array of moral (the Holocaust and the Bible) and national-interest (common democracy and allies against terror) arguments bolstered by hardball politics. The problem in Europe, where pro-Israel sentiment is much weaker, is that the EU operates on the unanimity principle. Experts I have spoken with think it unlikely that the EU could ever impose sanctions on the Jewish state.

And even if governments did impose sanctions, it is not a foregone conclusion that they would work. Some Palestinian proponents of BDS hold up the 1936 Arab general strike as a successful boycott campaign, arguing that it led Britain to issue the 1939 White Paper restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine. Given the connection many people draw between these immigration restrictions and the Holocaust, this argument sug-

gests that BDS proponents have a political tin ear. More importantly, this effort ultimately failed to prevent the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948.

But we do not have to go back that far to find evidence of how unreliable sanctions are as instruments of statecraft. Even though trade makes up 85 percent of Palestine's GNP, and 90 percent of that is with Israel, the Israelis have not been able to use the economic weapon to dampen Palestinian nationalism. Why would anyone think that economic sanctions would be more effective upon Israel, which is much less economically dependent upon trade? And as the *New York Times* recently reported, the U.S. government is having trouble enforcing its Iran Sanctions Act, a policy that has broad bipartisan support.

Even the most optimistic proponents of economic statecraft like Haufbauer and his Institute International for Economics collaborators Jeffrey Schott and Kimberly Elliot concede that sanctions achieve their objectives in only slightly more than 30 percent of the cases. In a comprehensive assessment of the IIE sanctions database, University of Chicago political scientist Robert Pape calculated that the actual success rate was closer to 4 percent. Pape also found that sanctions never work when applied to core issues in a state, especially those involving nationalism. Zionism represents the unifying consensus today in Israel, and while not all Israelis regard the territories beyond the 1967 borders as part of Israel, there is no doubt that Jewish nationalism makes it hard to disentangle from the occupation.

As the constant references to Apartheid make clear, the South African case looms large in the mind of BDS proponents. But as with all historical analogies, there are limits to how much the comparison applies. Many South Africa experts have concluded that international sanctions were not the most important factor

in the downfall of the white minority regime, pointing instead to the greater roles of the internal resistance movements; changes in the global economy that undermined the economic basis of the Apartheid regime; the end of the Cold War, which removed the security rationale for the status quo in the region; and the decision by the United States government to support peaceful transition to majority rule.

Even if one accepts that sanctions played some role in the fall of Apartheid, the differences between the South African and Israeli cases should give BDS proponents pause. One important difference is demographics. While down the road, Jews may become a minority in Greater Israel if the occupation continues, today the balance is roughly equal in Israel and the West Bank, and within the 1967 borders, Jews are a significant majority of the population, a very different balance from Apartheid South Africa where whites were truly in the minority.

Moreover, unlike the African National Congress, the Palestinian resistance is very weak: the West Bank and Gaza are divided between the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas and the secular Palestinian Authority, and with the death of Yasser Arafat there is no Palestinian equivalent to the ANC's charismatic leader, Nelson Mandela.

In addition, while Israel has suffered in many respects in recent years from the ongoing conflict and periodic Intifadas, its economy has nonetheless done quite well in transitioning into the information and service age. While trade makes up a significant part of its economy, of the 196 countries for which the World Bank has data, Israel ranks only 86th in terms of the trade dependency. States with an equal or higher trade exposure, such as Syria (65 percent), Serbia (68 percent), Cote d'Ivoire (74 percent), or Libya (94 percent), have not proven particularly amenable to eco-

nomic sanctions over the years.

One might nonetheless argue that since the BDS movement has so clearly aggravated many Israelis and their supporters in other countries, it must be having some salutary effect. But there is a tendency in Israel to regard every adverse development—from a rudimentary Iranian nuclear program to primitive rockets in Gaza and South Lebanon—as an existential threat. While even hardliners would prefer no sanctions, it does not follow that boycotts or divestment would force them to compromise on deeply held issues. The politically influential faction in power in Israel is willing to sacrifice democracy to maintain the current dimensions of the Jewish state, and is so committed to the Greater Israel project that they are willing to defy the U.S. president. It's hard to imagine that sanctions will affect them.

Nor is the current global security environment propitious for BDS: 9/11 has provided the Israelis with the opportunity to link their struggle with the Palestinians to America's global war on terrorism. This may in part explain why despite early rhetoric about even-handedness in President Obama's June 2009 Cairo speech, the reality of U.S. policy was, at least until recently, better captured in Vice President Biden's assurance to Israelis in March 2010 that there is "no space" between the two countries.

To be sure, the BDS movement has some utility beyond irritating Israelis and their international supporters. It has the educational value of raising consciousness about the occupation and it has the symbolic value of mobilizing opponents of Israeli policies around a concrete program of action. Perhaps these are sufficient reasons to support the movement irrespective of its prospects for success.

But the danger is that in focusing on these things, critics overestimate the prospects for achieving results and underestimate the weaknesses of these

instruments of statecraft. Norman Finkelstein, a consistent proponent of Palestinian rights, concedes that the BDS movement has had some success but cautions against the "tendency now to exaggerate its significance."

This may explain why not all veterans of the struggle for Palestinian rights are unqualified supporters of the BDS movement. MIT linguistics professor and long-time critic of Israel Noam Chomsky opposes sanctions altogether. Peace activist Rabbi Arthur Waskow argues instead that "the major change that needs to happen is a profound change in the actions of the United States government. ... It's the United States government you've got to look to, not private industry or private commerce."

Getting the U.S. government to change will not be easy, as history amply demonstrates. But the argument most likely to sway U.S. policymakers is national security. CENTCOM commander David Petraeus recently testified that the widespread "perception of U.S. favoritism for Israel ... limits the strength and depth of U.S. partnerships" in the Arab world and thereby undermines our war with al-Qaeda. That logic reportedly led Vice President Joe Biden to tell Netanyahu that continuing Israeli settlement building in occupied East Jerusalem "undermines the security of our troops who are fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan" and President Obama to conclude that resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict is "a vital national security interest of the United States." It is hard to imagine the BDS movement's largely moral appeal having a similarly galvanizing effect. ■

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Arts & Letters

THEATER

[*The White Guard*, directed by Howard Davies, Royal National Theatre, London]

Stalin's Favorite Dissident

By Tom Streithorst

BACK IN THE 1930s, after Stalin had finished starving the Ukrainians into submission, was in the midst of slaughtering the kulaks, and was getting ready to murder his own party members, the biggest hit on the Moscow stage was Mikhail Bulgakov's "The Days of the Turbins." It was their "Cats" or, as the head of the Moscow Arts Theatre said at the time, "another 'Seagull' for a new generation." Its appeal to sophisticated Russian theatergoers might have been that it had no tractors, no Stakhanovite workers, no heroic Red Army, none of the tawdry claptrap of typical Soviet propaganda. Instead, its deeply sympathetic heroes were bourgeois intellectuals fighting to restore czarist rule, honest to goodness enemies of the revolution.

Today the play, under its original title, "The White Guard"—a name too politically charged under the Soviet regime—is enjoying a revival at London's Royal National Theatre. I have long wondered how an enemy of the proletariat could have written Stalin's favorite play, so when I heard that it was to be per-

formed for the first time in London since the 1970s, I rushed to get a ticket. I wasn't sure what to expect, but assumed that Bulgakov would have had to suppress his anti-communist convictions in order to get the play produced. I was wrong.

When first performed in 1926, the Communist press denounced the play as counterrevolutionary and suggested that the Soviet government take Bulgakov out and "bash him over the head with a basin." Normally this would have been enough to shut the production down and imprison its author, but "The Days of the Turbins" found an unlikely patron in Joseph Stalin. When he first attended a performance, as the curtain fell, he rose from his box and gave a standing ovation. He would return to see the play some 15 times, insist that it be revived when the authorities closed it, and in a legendary moment in the history of Soviet dissident literature, he telephoned Bulgakov from the Kremlin when the writer was broke and got him a job.

Mikhail Bulgakov (1891-1940), best known for his magic realist novel *The Master and Margarita*, despised the Soviet regime. His 1924 novel, *The Heart of the Dog*, tells the story of a kindly professor who transplants the pituitary gland of a human into a common street dog, transforming the cur into a crass Bolshevik. It is a hysterically funny critique of the Soviet concept of the New Man, telling us that a dog remains a dog, even as he dresses in human clothes and parrots Marxist slogans.

Bulgakov was a snob. For him, the workers and their party were lowlifes. His ideal was the pre-revolutionary intel-

ligentsia—that was the world into which he was born. His father, a professor at Kiev Theological Seminary, raised Mikhail and his six siblings in a profoundly cultured atmosphere.

The play, based on Bulgakov's own family history, opens in the Turbins' large and comfortable apartment in Kiev. Alexei, a colonel in the White Guard, is typing orders, Nicolai is singing, their sister Lena is preparing dinner. It is November 1918. For the moment, their city is still controlled by the White Guard, their German allies, and the Hetman, a German puppet. But Kiev is surrounded by an armed mob. In the Kremlin, the Bolsheviks rule and starving Muscovites are reduced to eating house cats. Outside, you hear gunfire, but inside their flat, the old order remains. Friends stream in from the cold to laugh at each other's jokes, sing songs, flirt, drink vodka, and eat. For all of them, soldiers, scholars, and poets, the Turbins' home is a sanctuary in a world that is falling apart. "These Turbins are. A castle in themselves to protect us from the. Horrors," a drunken poet declaims, shortly before he collapses into his soup.

The next day, battle. The second act opens with slapstick comedy set in the Hetman's palace as the self-important toady engineers his escape upon learning that his German allies are abandoning the city. Then a scene with the peasant army, their brutality and venality exposed, contrasting with the nobility (and naivety) of Alexei's White Guard soldiers as they realize they are doomed. The play ends back in the Turbins' apartment as the Bolsheviks are about to enter the city. They recognize their old

world is finished. They can do nothing but accept their fate while striving to remain true to their values. The world has changed, but they will remain the same. They can do no less.

Alexei's long speech at the end of Act I summarizes Bulgakov's views. Their real enemy, he tells his friends, is not just the Bolsheviks but "this modern world."

This world hates us for our past, our tradition, our strength. This world of every man for himself and damn the rest of you; this gaping grasping, endless stream of envy and hatred we've unleashed. Those are the real enemies we face, deep in the shadows. This modern man with no name, no past, no love. This desperate hate-filled man born of loneliness and frustration. This man with nothing to be proud of, nothing he is a part of. There is a tide rising against us, and all we know and all that we define ourselves with will be eradicated. Bigger than Petlyura, bigger than Bolshevism. It is the future, and I hate it. Either we will bury it or it will bury us. That is the battle we are fighting, gentlemen.

Bulgakov is deeply conservative, of a sort we don't meet very often anymore. It is hard to imagine Newt Gingrich or Sarah Palin or even Milton Friedman railing against "the modern world." Bulgakov's ideology, however, is reminiscent of the great-granddaddy of conservative thought, Edmund Burke. Burke, of course, wrote his masterpiece in opposition to the rationalist ideology of the French Revolution. The Jacobins did more than just chop off Louis XVI's head. They argued that all existing traditions should be eliminated, that the old world could be swept away. Ardent enthusiasts of the decimal system, they even abolished the seven-day week. Burke argued against them that logic was overrated, that organic traditions served profound purpose that mere reason could not fathom. The Bolsheviks, with their faith in "scientific" Marx-

ism, were the heirs of the French Revolution, Jacobins on crystal meth.

When the Turbins and their friends sing "God Save the Czar" (while fretting that the downstairs neighbors will report them), it is not because they believe in the divine right of kings or even that Nicholas II was a wise ruler, but rather because they always have. The czar was an accustomed part of their world and precious for that reason alone.

More than just a traditionalist, Bulgakov was also deeply elitist. He knew without question that opera was better than folk songs, that Pushkin was greater than Gorky, that he and his intellectual friends were superior to the workers and peasants about to overthrow their world.

For him, the Bolsheviks were hateful because they scorned tradition and sought to raise the great unwashed above their betters. Burke similarly railed against the French Revolution because for the Jacobins "a king is but a man; a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal; and an animal not of the highest order." For both of these writers, hierarchy and tradition had value that the falsely rationalist Bolsheviks and Jacobins were fools to ignore. This is a truth that the modern world, and even much of the conservative movement, has lost.

The Turbins and their friends represent the highest flowering of Russian civilization. They are cultured, literate, decent, caring, honorable, and very, very funny. They enjoy each other's company, wit, and laughter. For them, opera and literature are not affectations but basic pleasures. Conversation is both sport and delight. One cannot watch this play and not mourn the destruction of the most civilized class in Russian history.

It's understandable that audiences in Moscow and Leningrad flocked to the play, which surely reminded them of the cultured lives they had lost, but why did Stalin? A scholar of Russian literature tells us it "delighted the leader, apparently because in showing the Whites as a noble group, it demonstrated that the

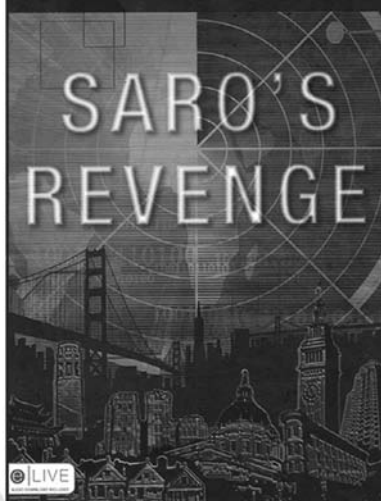
Bolsheviks had defeated a worthy opponent."

I don't buy that explanation. The Turbins are everything you and I hope to be on our best days, but a worthy opponent they are not. They are doomed, ineffectual, easily tossed by the currents of history. I prefer to think Stalin liked the play because it reminded him of the world he aspired to in his youth. Yes, young Stalin was a revolutionary, a bank robber, a bandit, but in pre-revolutionary days, the sophisticated life of the intelligentsia was all around him. A young man from Georgia must have yearned to be a part of it. Locked in the Kremlin, surrounded by his brutish bootlickers, Stalin might have missed the world of civilized conversation and deep friendship that he and his comrades destroyed. In some part of his black heart, perhaps he wished it wasn't gone. ■

Tom Streithorst writes from London.

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BOOKS

[*Bomb Power: The Modern Presidency and the National Security State*, Garry Wills, Penguin Press, 288 pages]

Wills Power

By Patrick Allitt

DURING WORLD WAR II, Gen. Leslie Groves supervised hundreds of exceptional people in a vast operation to create a conflict-ending weapon. Secretly, this concentration of nuclear scientists and technologists built the first atom bomb. Secretly, they tested it in the New Mexico desert. Secretly, President Truman, who had only just found out about the project, authorized the use of two such bombs against Japan. Secretly, the Army Air Force carried out the mission and destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Secrecy in wartime was one thing, but should it persist in peacetime? Almost at once, the Truman administration decided that it should, and a mania for classification set in. As the Cold War began, Truman and his successors created new secret organizations to advise them and to gather information covertly. They worked out ways to bypass congressional oversight. The National Security Council, the CIA, the expanded nuclear-weapons program—all were shrouded in secrecy. Political status accrued to anyone with authority to read classified documents. Those denied clearance became outsiders and lost credibility.

Garry Wills has opposed concentrated executive power and secrecy ever since the late 1960s, when he witnessed their abuse by Presidents Johnson and Nixon. In *Bomb Power*, he describes the rise of executive secrecy over the last 70 years, tracing its origins back to the Manhattan Project. He shows how the constant assertion of

threats to national security has distorted the balance of powers specified in the Constitution.

Executive secrecy is, in this account, entirely malevolent because it encourages presidential recklessness and undermines the trust in citizens that democracy requires. Recent examples include the second Bush administration's use of rendition, torture, and warrantless wiretapping, and the Obama administration's decision, after early murmurs of dissent, to carry on with all of these policies. Recent abuses of power are just the tip of the iceberg. Wills describes an astonishing succession of presidential initiatives, all of which excluded Congress, concentrated power in the White House, and deceived voters. He describes Truman's commitment of forces to war in Korea without congressional authorization, President Eisenhower's secret operations in the 1950s to overthrow regimes in Iran and Guatemala and kill their leaders, President Kennedy's plots to assassinate Fidel Castro and invade Cuba, President Johnson's unilateral plunge into Vietnam, President Nixon's "secret bombing" of Cambodia, President Reagan's covert dealings with Iran and the Contras in express violation of the law, and many more.

These ventures, he argues, would have been bad enough if they had succeeded. But in most cases they didn't. Insiders to the world of secrecy loved the idea that they had access to special high-quality knowledge, but as often as not they were the victims of wishful thinking, gulled by confidence tricksters and fake experts. Before the Bay of Pigs disaster, for instance, Cuba itself and the Cuban community in Miami were alive with gossip about the forthcoming "secret" invasion. A *New York Times* journalist in Miami even wrote a story about it. His editor checked with bureau chief James Reston, who told him to suppress it for reasons relating to government secrecy. Then the fiasco took place. Ironically, running the story might have shown the planners that they were living in a fools' paradise and prompted

them to call off the mission. More recently, President Bush and a tight circle of advisers accepted the false claims of Ahmad Chalabi that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction and that an American invasion of Iraq would be easy and popular. By circumventing the agencies that normally evaluated raw intelligence data, and by selecting a source they found ideologically congenial, they misled themselves into war and then fought it under false pretenses.

Besides concentrating power in the executive and provoking immense blunders, says Wills, government has often used secrecy to cover up embarrassing incidents. In 1948, for example, an Air Force plane crashed during the testing phase of a guided-missile system, killing five servicemen and four civilians. The civilians' widows sued the Air Force for compensation, but it refused to turn over its report of the crash, citing national security and the need for secrecy. The Supreme Court upheld the Air Force in an important case, *United States v. Reynolds et al* (1953), which has been cited extensively to justify subsequent extensions of executive secrecy. In 2000, however, the daughter of one of the casualties finally managed to read the report (declassified in 1996), only to discover that no secret equipment had been on board the plane and that disclosure would have had no national-security implications. "Instead, the report told a horror story of incompetence, neglect, bungling, and tragic error" relating to the plane itself, which was unfit to fly. Wills adds, "This story was disgraceful to the Air Force, and that, not national security, explains the hard determination of the government not to let the story come out." Did the Supreme Court revise its opinion in light of this revelation? No. Reviewing the case in 2003, in the wake of 9/11, the Rehnquist Court denied the writ of *coram nobis* that could have nullified the earlier decision.

To read *Bomb Power* is to feel a rising sense of indignation. Wills, a skilful rhetorician, knows how to guide the

reader's emotions toward his conclusion: the United States has been turned into what the Founding Fathers would have called a tyranny. Concentrated arbitrary power wielded from an all-powerful center and undermining citizens' rights, often in secret, beyond accountability, makes nonsense of the idea of government by the people, for the people. What makes the indictment particularly effective is Wills's even-handedness. He's not condemning Republican presidents and letting Democrats off the hook; neither is he condemning the Democrats and offering us the GOP as a consoling alternative. He calls down a plague on both houses and scolds a wide array of intellectual and political apologists for the accumulation of secret executive power. How did he reach the vantage from which to make such a sweeping denunciation?

Wills, born in 1934, intended to become a Jesuit priest. After a stint at the new conservative magazine *National Review* in the late 1950s, however, he left the seminary, married, and went to Yale for graduate school in the classics. After a few years in academia, his rising reputation as a journalist gained him a full-time job at *Esquire*. An ardent Barry Goldwaterite in 1964, he started to have second thoughts about race, poverty, and anti-communism as he covered the riots and antiwar demonstrations of the mid- and late 1960s. He sympathized with the sufferings of inner-city African-Americans, met Black Panther leaders, went to Martin Luther King Jr.'s funeral in 1968, and witnessed the riots in Miami and Chicago during that year's political conventions. When his book about Richard Nixon came out in 1970, he was added to the White House "enemies list." His old *National Review* cronies denounced him for abandoning the movement.

Despite the condemnations, Wills never became a liberal or radical. He always regarded liberalism as philosophically incoherent. Rather, he began to consider neglected elements of the

conservative heritage, a process he describes in *Confessions of a Conservative* (1979). He realized that nothing in the history of the world has been less conservative than capitalism, a system that requires a constant knocking over of the old and taking a chance on the new and untested. He also came to believe, as he wrote in *Confessions*, that "conservatives are bound to accept the concept of 'historic guilt' for racial wrongs, since those who glory in inherited values and traditions must admit accountability for historic wrongs." He then offered an ingenious conservative defense of affirmative action to remedy these traditional wrongs, at a time when most movement conservatives condemned it.

What was the fount of this unusual conservatism? In part, it was the long tradition of Catholic teaching, to which he remained loyal despite frequent writings about papal dishonesty and Church scandals. Also in part, it was the Founding Fathers and the Constitution. In "The Convenient State," a superb essay published before his 30th birthday, Wills had argued that the accumulated political wisdom of the ancients, the Catholic Church, and the Anglo-American people was more fully embodied in the Constitution and the *Federalist* than anywhere else. These documents were, he argued, more realistic about human nature, about the human propensity to be corrupted by power, and about the need for conciliation, compromise, and peace than any other source in the history of political philosophy. They drew on hard practical experience and avoided the abstract theorizing of the French Enlightenment.

After writing "The Convenient State," Wills returned frequently to the Revolutionary era, with *Inventing America* (1978) on Jefferson's draft of the Declaration of Independence, *Explaining America* (1981) on Madison and the *Federalist*, and *Cincinnatus* (1984) on George Washington. Together these studies create a panorama of the intellectual world of 18th-century America. He shows that the Founders looked

backward to the accumulated political wisdom of experience, remembered the fate of other republics in history, and were decidedly tradition-oriented for a band of revolutionaries. Meanwhile, Wills continued to write on contemporary politics, with books on Presidents Nixon (*Nixon Agonistes*, 1970), Kennedy (*The Kennedy Imprisonment*, 1982), and Reagan (*Reagan's America*, 1987). No other author of our times has mastered both 18th- and 20th-century American history so thoroughly or brought them into such close contact, using the Founders' standards to judge the moderns.

Wills is a skilful reader of texts with an encyclopedic knowledge of the history of English usage. Entire chapters of his Revolutionary-era books are devoted to single words and their changing usage. When necessary, Wills can use these skills to devastating effect. In *Bomb Power*, for example, he shreds the flimsy historical argument made by John Yoo, the Bush administration lawyer who argued that the president can take the country to war on his sole initiative. Yoo argued that in the 18th century, the word "declare" meant merely to publicize something that was already happening, so that the Constitution, when it specified that Congress has the right to declare war, was not being given the right to decide whether or not the nation should fight. Wills offers an impromptu seminar on the history of the word "declare" that makes Yoo's arguments appear pathetically threadbare.

Yoo was also the lawyer who wrote a memorandum in 2002 seeking to justify the torturing of prisoners by waterboarding. The U.S. anti-torture statute specifies that interrogation becomes torture if it is "specifically intended to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering." Yoo argues that if the interrogator's primary intention is to extract information from a suspect and that the inflicting of severe pain is merely a by-product, then he "lacks the requisite intent" to be convicted of torture "even if ... [he] ... knows that severe pain will

result from his actions.” Wills retorts that this kind of “philological hocus-pocus” in practice permits the interrogators always to deny that they are torturers merely by claiming that the severe harm was incidental to their quest for information.

The pleasure of reading Garry Wills comes from his ability always to find something new and stimulating to say on apparently exhausted topics; he rarely settles for the conventional wisdom on any issue. It's tempting, once you've grown up, to have a stock response to every situation and to enjoy knowing what you think about the chronic political questions that are never settled once and for all. Wills won't let you rest in your convictions, and no matter what your place on the political spectrum he's forever throwing out little nuggets of unsettling wisdom to make you doubt your own complacency.

Bomb Power arrives at an interesting moment. The new president's honeymoon has ended, and he can't make Congress pass his legislation. Each party has stymied the other. As you read Wills, there might well be a nagging voice at the back of your head saying, “It's hard enough getting anything done as it is—do we really want to reduce presidential power and give more authority to Congress? Surely that's just a recipe for absolute deadlock.” Or if you're a foreign-policy hawk, the voice is probably saying, “Times have changed, and the secret powers are essential now in view of the unprecedented threats we face.” Wills would probably answer something like this: “Times change, but human nature doesn't. Power corrupted in the 1780s, and it still corrupts today. The Founders were willing to accept a certain amount of inefficiency because it was a price worth paying to forestall tyranny.” On the foreign policy question he might say, “How can we possibly know how severe the threats facing us are today, when so much of the vital information necessary to evaluate them is withheld from the public, when gov-

ernment sometimes finds it useful to manufacture scares, and when threats can sometimes be a matter of self-fulfilling prophecy?”

Wills offers no consolation or hope. The last time the federal government surrendered powers and voluntarily shrank itself was in the 1920s. There was plenty to be scared about in the world then, too, not least the rising dictatorships of Mussolini and Stalin, with Hitler just around the corner. But somehow the will to scale back government still existed, and the balance of power between state and federal governments still bore some resemblance to the Founders' ideal. The shrinkage ended with the Great Depression, after which the growth of executive power has never stopped. President Reagan said he would be a government-shrinker, but when it came to the point, he wasn't. He just kept adding to the volume, the executive reach, and the secrecy.

Think about *Bomb Power* next time you are sitting in an airport departure lounge. In the background, you will hear the canned voice over and over declaring that today, “the threat level is at orange.” It's been at orange for years now. Ordinary travelers aren't allowed to know why. Are plotters being foiled? If so, the foiling is taking place in secret. But if the “threat level” is still orange, there must be lots more plotters. Should you feel scared, or should you feel grateful to the secret agencies for keeping you safe? Is it possible to feel gratitude to someone or something you are not allowed to know about, even though you have paid for it? And doesn't the thought occasionally cross your mind that this everlasting orange is as much a matter of bureaucratic convenience for somebody, somewhere, as it is an accurate description of real dangers facing real people from real enemies? ■

Patrick Allitt is a professor of history at Emory University. He is author of The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History and Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America, 1950-1985.

[*The Next Hundred Million: America in 2050*, Joel Kotkin, Penguin Press, 320 pages]

News From the Future

By Steve Sailer

JOEL KOTKIN'S new book on population growth in America, *The Next Hundred Million: America in 2050*, is that rare work of futurism whose title downplays the changes in store for us. The current Census Bureau projection is not that the U.S. will grow by merely 100 million residents from 2010 to 2050, but by 129 million, from 310 million today to 439 million in 40 years.

Although he's reluctant to be precise about what's looming, Kotkin, a veteran commentator on social geography and a fellow at Chapman University in Orange County, assures us that the population bubble is, on the whole, very good news. “[B]ecause of America's unique demographic trajectory among advanced countries, it should emerge by midcentury as the most affluent, culturally rich, and successful nation in human history,” he writes. “No other advanced, populous country will enjoy such ethnic diversity.”

Perhaps. Yet the U.S. already was the most successful nation in human history. In 1969, for example, a mere 203 million Americans, even without the enjoyments of much diversity, got the human race to the moon. Presumably, the 439 million highly diverse residents of the U.S. in 2050 will have reached, at minimum, Alpha Centauri.

But I'm finding it hard to share Kotkin's enthusiasm for what he calls America's “vibrant demography” because I'm taping this book review out at the Department of Motor Vehicles office in Van Nuys, California. My son is waiting in a 500-foot-long line to get to the first window so he can wait to get to another window, which will probably shut down for the evening before he finishes.

California's government is broke, so the DMV is closed several Fridays per month and is ostentatiously understaffed the rest of the time.

Van Nuys is in the center of Los Angeles's San Fernando Valley, where I grew up and where Kotkin has lived for decades. Long ago, the Valley was celebrated for making the California dream affordable to the average American, but we've since been test-driving America's future. When watching all the vibrant demography at the Van Nuys DMV waiting to take their driving tests, the next 40 years appear less edifying than they do in Kotkin's prose.

On the rare occasions when ordinary Americans are asked what they think about population growth, they are leery. A 2006 Gallup poll inquired, "In the future, do you think population growth will be—a major problem, a minor problem, or not a problem—in the United States?" "Major problem," responded 57 percent, "minor problem," said 26 percent, and "not a problem," breezed 14 percent.

Unsurprisingly, elite indoctrination makes Americans more ignorant about the realities of population and immigration. Gallup noted, "In an interesting twist, Americans with less formal education are the most likely to correctly attribute population growth to immigration, while Americans with post-graduate education are least likely to do so." Only 37 percent of people with a post-graduate degree knew what they were talking about, compared to 56 percent who had never been to college.

The real question, though, is less how bad a problem immigration-driven population growth will become but the "opportunity cost" of the forgone America—that less crowded and better educated country that we won't be leaving to our children due to our immigration policies.

Kotkin, who leans mildly in a libertarian direction, can't really explain why his doubly denser America is preferable. He simply assumes that his readers won't be so uncool as to notice that illegal immigration tends to create a

vast hereditary proletariat. That's not the worst fate imaginable for America, but if the more productive will be required to subsidize the education, the policing, and now the healthcare of the less productive (which, one way or another, we shall), why would we want to continue to import millions of unskilled and highly fertile foreigners? In California in 2005, foreign-born Latinas were giving birth at the rate of 3.7 babies per lifetime (almost the same total fertility as Haiti) versus 2.2 for American-born Latinas and 1.4 for American-born Asians. Ouch.

Although Kotkin is enthusiastic about the quantity of these upcoming residents, he's reticent about their average quality. After a generation in Los Angeles, he knows what East Coast pundits don't yet grasp: the children and grandchildren of illegal immigrants are not merging into the educated middle class. Yet he can't come out and admit that either. Whenever Kotkin appears finally ready to grapple with this central question about America's future, he wanders

ALTHOUGH KOTKIN IS **ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE QUANTITY** OF THESE UPCOMING RESIDENTS, HE'S **RETICENT ABOUT THEIR AVERAGE QUALITY**.

off topic to rave about the technological innovativeness of legal immigrants in Silicon Valley or wax nostalgic about the rise of Ellis Island arrivals.

Why are we betting the country on the hope that a vast influx of foreigners and their descendants will benefit "ourselves and our Posterity" (to cite the Preamble to the Constitution's explanation of what the fundamental purpose of the United States of America is)? Is 42 percent more crowding really going to make the American citizens of 2010 and their posterity better off in 2050?

Benjamin Franklin observed in 1751 that Americans were happier than Europeans because a larger proportion of Americans could afford to own land, to marry, and to have children. Why? Because there were fewer Americans per acre. Franklin's logic about high

wages and cheap land being conducive to marriage still applies. Yet his insight has been forgotten in the bipartisan elite consensus in favor of lax immigration policies that inflate the supply of labor and the demand for land.

Not surprisingly, the illegitimacy rate rose from 33 percent in 1998 to 41 percent in 2008. At this pace, the whole country will reach African-American levels of illegitimacy by 2050. The number of babies born to married women fell 5 percent over the last decade, while out-of-wedlock births rose 34 percent. As the number of individuals who get off to a good start in life continues to drop relative to those who grow up in disorder, how are the former going to subsidize the latter?

In truth, even Kotkin's rosy vision of America in 2050 doesn't sound all that enticing, although that's to his credit. Kotkin has always been the most level-headed of futurists. While other writers on urban affairs love to suggest that we'll all move downtown to hang out with Richard Florida's gay creative set

or that we'll all commute to work on solar-powered magnetic-levitation high-speed rail, Kotkin predicts that America in four decades will look like America today, only more so: more cars, more suburbs, and more strip malls. In *The Next Hundred Million*, the America of 2050 sounds like a gigantic version of the San Fernando Valley of 2010, just with lousier weather.

As Kotkin explains, suburbia is where most people (including new immigrants) want to live. Being a regular family guy with a wife, a couple of kids, and a house in the burbs helps make Kotkin a rare voice for common sense among urban-planning pundits, a field that has long attracted megalomaniacally-inclined aesthetes such as Le Corbusier and aesthetically-inclined megalomaniacs such as Hitler and Stalin. To

Kotkin, in contrast, the chief goal of land-use policy should be to encourage business and facilitate family.

His book would have benefited from more detailed descriptions of why most American moms prefer to live in car-centric suburbs rather than in the high-rises favored by so many single urban-planning pundits, such as bachelor blogger Matthew Yglesias. Many who write about transportation policies are too inexperienced with life to grasp why women with children prefer to drive. "Walkability" is a pleasant amenity in a neighborhood. Still, the sheer tonnage of groceries that the modern family woman buys, typically at a distant Costco or Walmart, means she needs a car to manhandle her purchases home. And once she decides she must have a car, it makes sense for her to live somewhere with ample parking, light traffic, and other suburban blessings.

But how will adding 129 million people make it easier for America as a whole to cut carbon emissions? (Especially when so many immigrants move here in hope of being able to buy big SUVs—ideally with spinning rims.)

America's future, according to Kotkin, is Los Angeles writ large. Yet L.A. has wound up with the worst of both worlds. It was planned for low density, with few parks, bike paths, or even sidewalks, but it has wound up one of the densest municipalities in the country. (Among major metropolitan areas, Greater Los Angeles now ranks second only to New York in people per square mile.)

When I was a 13-year-old in 1972 in the Valley, I biked to school. The subsequent increase in cars on the streets means that Valley parents don't encourage their kids to ride bicycles anymore. Instead, they chauffeur them around, which further worsens traffic.

This kind of path-dependent vicious circle is common in Southern California. The government can't afford to buy up property to retrofit facilities because land is so expensive. Add in Los Angeles's NIMBY attitudes and attack-dog

lawyers, and you have civic gridlock.

It takes forever to build anything in California, whether a subway or a housing development, especially near the coast. Tracts with golf courses typically require a decade or more of squabbling between lawyers and environmental consultants. Because the supply of housing can't respond quickly to increases in demand, California is subject to ruinous housing-price spikes. These bubbles can deflate calamitously, dragging down the national and even global economy. A large majority of all American mortgage dollars defaulted in the current economic crash were lost in California.

Not surprisingly, Kotkin is falling out of love with Los Angeles and in love with Houston, an L.A. Jr. less hemmed in by ocean, mountains, and liberal regulations. The housing bubble didn't much happen in Texas because the second most populous state has flat, well-watered prairies to build upon. And perhaps more importantly, Texas has a pro-business, self-confident conservative electoral majority.

Kotkin almost unloads an interesting political idea, but he can't quite pull the trigger to explain that the contrasting fates of the only two large majority minority states—high-cost and bankrupt California versus low-cost and mildly prospering Texas—suggest something paradoxical about the future of America when the whole country goes majority minority (now forecast for 2042). As mass immigration renders the population relatively less educated and productive, the only kind of government we'll be able to afford at the federal level is a Texas-style small one.

Unfortunately, while that theory makes economic sense, it's politically unrealistic. Modern immigrants and their descendants vote solidly Democratic because, rationally enough, they're pro-tax-and-spend and pro-affirmative action. And why would that be different in 2050? ■

Steve Sailer blogs at iSteve.blogspot.com.

[*Edwin O. Reischauer and the American Discovery of Japan*, George R. Packard, Columbia University Press, 368 pages]

Juggernaut Japan

By Eamonn Fingleton

BEFORE THERE WAS Beatlemania, there was Reischauermania. Admittedly, the latter was more localized and, of course, it is not much remembered these days. But it was huge at the time, and in the end it may prove to have left a bigger mark on history.

The object of adoration, a dapper, middle-aged Harvard East Asian studies scholar named Edwin Oldfather Reischauer, shot to fame when he became John F. Kennedy's ambassador to Japan. Even before he arrived, Japanese officials had determined to treat him as a superstar. In a gesture of rare obeisance, Tokyo's Haneda Airport was cleared of all other traffic as his plane approached. After a short welcoming ceremony—broadcast live on national television and witnessed by more than 100 journalists—Reischauer was whisked to his new residence six miles away. Policemen stood at every intersection, cordoning off his route. Given that all this took place at rush hour in the world's largest metropolitan area, it is a fair bet that as many as a million other road users were left fuming.

The story of Reischauer's sudden apotheosis is one of the more interesting episodes in George R. Packard's new biography. As recounted by Packard, Reischauer's five-year term was unique in the annals of American diplomacy. The scholar-ambassador was constantly mobbed by Japanese reporters and celebrity-hunters alike. He quickly concluded that there was no point in even trying to escape his gilded cage.

His partisans have always presented Reischauer as one of America's all-time great experts on Japan. Although this is a view Packard outspokenly propounds,

the balance of evidence suggests that, at least as far as key policy issues were concerned, Reischauer was badly misguided. It was on his watch that U.S.-Japan economic relations began to go off the rails. Trapped in a diplomatic bubble and with more than a touch of hubris, Reischauer opted not to disappoint his doting Japanese fans. Instead of pressing firmly for a phasing out of Japanese mercantilism, he initiated an inglorious American diplomatic tradition of turning a deaf ear to U.S. exporters' complaints about rigged markets.

That legacy remains relevant today because, though you would never know it from reading the American press, Japanese mercantilism is still going strong. U.S. trade negotiators have simply given up fighting it, and the results are written all over international trade statistics. It is an interesting, if little known, fact that between 1989, the year of peak American concern with "juggernaut Japan," and 2008, Japan's current account surplus increased more than threefold. In the same period, the U.S. current account deficit ballooned more than sixfold. Not one of the major U.S.-Japan trade disputes of the 1980s was ever resolved—not cars, not financial services, not even rice.

Japan's stonewalling has in recent years come to be widely admired and imitated throughout East Asia. Meanwhile, the United States, which in the 1960s enjoyed unparalleled leverage to shape the world trading system along open-market lines, is now more abjectly in hock to foreign creditors than any major power since the late-era Ottoman Empire.

It is hard to exaggerate how far Japan still diverges from American ideas of fair trade. Take the car industry. The combined share of all foreign makes in Japan totals a mere 4 percent. Even Volkswagen, which outsells Toyota in many markets around the world, is nowhere. Then there is Renault, which in 1999, via a major stake in Nissan, acquired ostensible control of Japan's second-largest car distribution system. It cannot get its cars into its own showrooms. All this pro-

vides the Japanese auto cartel with a highly profitable domestic sanctuary from which to target world markets.

Characteristically, Packard, a diplomat-turned-policy-entrepreneur who has long been close to the Japanese establishment, makes no mention of cars and gives the entire trade story short shrift. Nonetheless, for anyone whose interest in Japan extends beyond kimonos and cherry blossoms, trade policy is surely key. It is now obvious that Tokyo was never sincere in its rhetorical support for free trade. Thus any serious assessment of Reischauer's legacy must begin by asking what he knew and when he knew it.

This book offers no enlightenment. Evidence from other sources, however, suggests that Reischauer started off his ambassadorial term as a relative innocent. He soon went the way of many lesser "Japan hands," however, as he was sucked into a pattern of increasing self-censorship and dissembling. That said, even intellectual opponents remember him as a generous-spirited man—a striking contrast to many of the other denizens of the intellectual alligator swamp that is Japanese studies. Moreover, he boasted an impressive tally of former students, including John Dower, author of *War Without Mercy*; Ivan P. Hall, author of *Bamboozled*; and Sen. Jay Rockefeller.

Although Reischauer was born and brought up in Japan, he had never lived there as an adult, and his childhood had been spent mainly among foreigners. It is a fair bet that his feel for 1960s Japan was not nearly as sure as his boosters have often suggested. Certainly Packard does little to counter revisionist doubts on this score.

That said, Reischauer certainly had some premonition of the train wreck ahead. This is clear from *Wanted: An Asian Policy*, a book published in 1955 in which he predicted that East Asian policymakers would systematically suppress their nations' consumption in an effort to generate super-high savings rates. As Reischauer was the first to realize, any serious policy of suppressing consump-

tion almost by definition implied a mercantilist approach to trade.

Of course, Japan was still poor in 1961, and Reischauer may sincerely have felt that it was in everyone's interests to cut the country a little slack. What he seems to have missed—arguably because of his "house arrest" in the embassy residence—was how quickly things changed. Certainly before he left Japan in the summer of 1966, it had drawn broadly level with Britain. Thus the time had surely come for Washington to press the Japanese for the same sort of trade reciprocation it had long expected from the British. (Japan's current account surplus reached a stunning 1.6 percent of national output in 1966, handily trouncing a flagging post-imperial Britain's surplus of 0.3 percent.)

On his return to the United States, Reischauer generally endorsed the Tokyo line even as Japanese mercantilism moved to the front pages. In spite of all this, or perhaps more correctly because of it, his reputation soared in many quarters. In 1985, Harvard named its Japan Institute after him.

Echoing a standard Japanese propaganda point, Reischauer slammed Detroit for failing to make cars configured for Japan's drive-on-the-left roads. To uninformed American readers, this seemed like a devastating indictment, but Reischauer knew better. It was one of the cheapest shots in Tokyo's propaganda arsenal. The Detroit companies had always, via subsidiaries in Europe, produced an impressive range of cars for drive-on-the-left markets. Although these cars—many of them made in Germany to superb engineering standards—were eminently saleable in Japan, they had always been frozen out. In any case, Japanese buyers of foreign cars are a group apart, who actually prefer to have the steering wheel on the wrong side. This has great snob appeal in a country where, thanks to high trade barriers, foreign cars are often priced up to twice as much as the locally produced equivalents. So great has been this tendency that, given a choice of configuration (both are usually available in European-

made cars), Japanese buyers are prepared to pay as much as \$5,000 more for an American-configured car. Reischauer's betrayal of Detroit goes entirely overlooked in Packard's account.

In fact, the book is marred by several rather revealing factual errors. For instance, Packard states, "the United States ran chronic balance of payments deficits in the early 1960s." In reality, and despite increasing pressure from Japanese mercantilism, America's overall trade remained in healthy surplus in the 1960s. The first significant overall deficit did not appear until 1972, and even then another decade was to pass before the deficits became baked in. The larger political point here is that to the extent that America's bilateral trade with Japan deteriorated in the early 1960s, this was a Japan-specific issue, and it said vastly more about Japanese protectionism than about American competitiveness.

Packard breaks new ground in some of his more personal observations. He suggests, for instance, that Reischauer's marriage to the Tokyo-born journalist Haru Matsukata was not the idyllic love match it was often portrayed as. Perhaps the book's most valuable contribution is its account of how Reischauer handled the Vietnam War. He knew better than almost anyone that the American effort was doomed. But he kept quiet for fear any challenge to the pro-war crowd would weaken his ability to influence Japan policy. His spinelessness contrasted sharply with the spunk with which John Kenneth Galbraith, the contemporaneous ambassador to India, denounced the war.

Trade apart, another key topic conspicuously overlooked in this book is the extent to which East Asian studies programs at American universities have come to depend on corporate donations for funding. Here Reischauer's legacy has proved positively toxic. In his capacity as Harvard's grand old man, he should have led his fellow scholars in resisting the trend. Instead, he was among the first to embrace it. In so doing, he gave vital cover to hundreds of less august—and less wealthy—institutions. The problem for American univer-

sities is, of course, that few corporate donors are entirely disinterested and this applies in spades in East Asian studies. Self-censorship is hard to prove in any particular case but the overall pattern is clear. When did Harvard last do a serious study on the Japanese car market? So much for that hallowed motto, "Veritas."

Unfortunately, where self-censorship is concerned, few observers are less likely to spill the beans on their East Asian studies peers than Packard himself. He is, after all, president of the United States-Japan Foundation, a controversial grant-giving institution endowed by the late Ryoichi Sasakawa. A Japanese uber-nationalist who delighted in describing himself as "the world's wealthiest fascist," Sasakawa narrowly escaped hanging as one of a small group of Japanese war leaders accused of so-called Class A war crimes after World War II. Among other things, he had been accused of torturing prisoners of war, a charge he implicitly admitted—to the foundation's acute embarrassment—in 1987. The fact that he boasted of a prodigious sex life has hardly added to the foundation's respectability; he claimed to have had sex with more than 500 women. Perhaps most controversially of all, Sasakawa never expressed remorse for his wartime activities.

Sasakawa money is terribly tainted, but that has not stopped dozens of top American educational institutions, not least allegedly Harvard, from sticking their erstwhile snooty snouts in the trough. (For the record, the Reischauer Institute's director Susan Pharr did not respond to repeated requests from *The American Conservative* to clarify Harvard's position.)

Edwin O. Reischauer, as a pivotal force in U.S.-Japan relations whose legacy remains central even today, was well worth a biography. But George R. Packard was not the person to write it. ■

Eamonn Fingleton has lived in Tokyo since 1985 and is the author most recently of In the Jaws of the Dragon: America's Fate in the Coming Era of Chinese Hegemony.

[*Last Exit to Utopia: The Survival of Socialism in a Post-Soviet Era*, Jean-François Revel, Encounter, 348 pages]

The French Neoconnection

By Claude Polin

THE LATE J.F. REVEL was a center-left journalist whose writings earned him a reputation as a reasonable, courageous, and profound political thinker. A member of the *Académie Française*—basically a social club that co-opts its members on various grounds, including even literary or scholarly talent—he attained some fame in the United States, where his professed anticommunism, after a fiercely pro-communist youth, has been favorably received on the Right.

Yet Revel's thinking is mostly comprised of received wisdom about the relative merits of liberalism and communism that has long been standard among supposed conservatives. Even ignoring the fact he spends too much time relating esoteric disputes among French intellectuals, the real interest of his books does not lie in their content but in the opportunity they give to assess the shortcomings of the arguments used by the Western Right to criticize the Left.

The modern world, he says, knows basically two types of societies: the communist and the liberal, the latter term being used in the European or Lockean sense. Individual freedom is the keystone of a liberal society, whereas a communist one strives to abolish it. Thus the latter produces utter economic scarcity, while liberalism stands for economic vigor, creativity, and efficiency. Finally, communist societies boast of their capacity for solidarity, but end up being brutally oligarchic, whereas "the liberalization of a society does not compel the abandonment of social programs, but better management of them."

All in all, communism is at best a hollow promise, a utopia whose only perfection lies in the fact it has never been implemented, whereas liberal societies, though not perfect, have proved better able to do precisely what communism used to pride itself on achieving—"unemployment compensation in western societies equals the salary of the average worker in a communist system." Liberalism is a thriving business, communism has drowned in its own blood, or so the cliché goes.

But communism has not drowned. Though communist societies are sheer nightmares, they have retained whole flocks of supporters, particularly among the Western intelligentsia. This is Revel's only originality: he dares raise the politically incorrect issue of the astonishing ability of communism to survive its own failures and apparent demise. The writers of *The Black Book of Communism* mistakenly—or was it part of a calculated deception?—concluded that communism was dead. It is to Revel's only credit to have doubted that.

Alas, the question is as well put as the answers are pathetic. Apart from an endless accumulation of facts and anecdotes illustrating communist vices and liberal virtues, nowhere can the reader find in Revel a systematic solution to the enigma. Communism is a "utopia" or an "ideal" or an "illusion which has beguiling power." Fine. But why is this utopia so alluring, the ideal so ideal, the illusion so beguiling? Communism stems from a "hatred of liberty," a "predilection for serfdom," "the anti-individualistic phobia of all totalitarians," "an obsession with the complete annihilation of the individual." Good. But again, why this hatred, this denial, this phobia, this obsession? Because "many people harbor a desire for totalitarianism," succumb to a "tropism towards totalitarianism," to a "totalitarian temptation" (the title of a previous book)? All that smacks of the famous *vertu dormitive de l'opium*. Ascribing the "spell of communism" to an "ongoing capacity for ideological terrorism" or to "the fear of committing the sin of anti-communism" is getting downright ridiculous.

"Your daughter," said the physician in one of Molière's plays, "has lost the ability to speak, and that is why your daughter is mute." Revel is at such a loss that he also invokes neurosis, the pathological love of the victim for its torturer, the famous Stockholm Syndrome, or "selective amnesia" or again a sort of mental viscosity, an "intellectual inertia," an "ideological persistence of vision." (Should all communists be committed to psychiatric clinics?) Finally, he ends up confessing that the resilience of communism is to him an unelucidated mystery, an "incredible fact." This is some feat for a book written to explain it away!

Reciprocally, Revel is hard put to understand why on earth anyone would keep tirelessly dreaming of a regime that kills, oppresses, impoverishes, debases, and deprives the individual of his own will to live when everyone is confronted with the evidence of liberalism's dividends. If "the only countries that have had the will and the means to create

raises the social issue. He thinks "a society dominated by the private sector is quite capable of compromising the well-being of consumers in the quest for profits. It is up to the State to prevent such excesses"—a socialist state, no doubt. In other words, he acknowledges that while liberalism may beat socialism at its own game, it cannot do so without some socialist push and shove. This is logical, after all: liberalism is not socialist—which is why it is so efficient!—hence liberalism stands to be corrected by socialism. Though socialism may be dead in communist countries, liberalism is sure to revive it in noncommunist ones. This is why communism is still so alluring: it is nothing but socialism perfected. All that explains why communism itself must appear to Revel and many conservatives as a totally nonsensical political choice: if one does not wish to confess that social liberalism leads to communism, one has no choice but to describe communism as an inexplicable mental illness.

MARX HIMSELF CONSIDERED COMMUNISM THE FULFILLMENT OF DEMOCRACY AND THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN.

effective welfare states, social security, family allowances, unemployment compensation, pensions, and so forth, are those with capitalist economies"; if "it was the nineteenth century liberals who first posed what was then called the social question ... and who answered it by working out several of the founding laws of modern social rights"; if, in other words, liberalism is just a better way of achieving the very aims of socialism, it becomes very difficult to understand why people who are attracted to socialism would not eventually be even more attracted to liberalism, which has proved to do so much better.

This is where Revel becomes useful, for he provides a glaringly obvious answer, though he does not, or does not want to, acknowledge it. He never claims to support liberalism pure and simple, but only the liberalism that

So Revel inadvertently delivers two useful lessons for conservatives. One is that it is impossible to overcome the allure of communism unless one stops attacking it in the name of the productive efficiency of liberalism. And it doesn't change things one bit to add—as Revel and many conservatives are wont to do—that social liberalism respects democracy or the rights of man, whereas communism violates both. For it remains to be proved that democracy and the rights of man are contrary to socialism: Marx himself considered communism the fulfillment of democracy and the full implementation of the rights of man. (The French historian Furet reminded Revel: "Communism is historically a version of democracy, its radicalized form; were it not for that, it would be hard to understand why so many people subscribe to it." Revel

flatly denies this, but provides no arguments.)

At the very least, being conservative means reassessing liberalism in terms other than mere productivity. A conservative should revert to Jefferson's frugal, and more or less rural, liberalism—preferring the independence granted by small landed property to the wealth acquired, for instance, by trade at the expense of becoming dependent upon clients. Or a conservative might go as far as the love of liberty of anarcho-liberals, who only ask that everyone be left to fend for himself, whatever his actual achievements. But in no case should a conservative adhere to a liberalism that bears as its primary trademark its capacity to distribute the greatest amount of delights to the greatest number, which is just asking for socialism.

The second lesson is that a conservative should be wary of modernity precisely for the reason that makes it so popular: it achieves material welfare. The inner certitude that man's most natural aim consists of indefinite material progress, or the primacy of economic preoccupations over any other, together with the corresponding unwillingness to inquire into the worth of traditional ways of thinking and living, may be precisely what breeds totalitarian communism and results in the oppression of man by man. Revel certainly suffers from shortsightedness when he proclaims his total disrespect for the past, as when he makes such flat statements as this: "one has the feeling that the totalitarian temptation is inspired by the traditional hatred for commerce and industry" or "communism bears the hallmark of closed [nationalistic] societies in which industrialism and urban-

ization are viewed as destroyers of traditional moral values, and globalization as a danger" so that communism to him eventually becomes a relic of the Dark Ages. He even speaks of "communist monarchies." But the only real way to account for totalitarian communism is to see it as an offspring of modern materialism. The lesson is clear: it takes a conservative to understand the inner logic of modernity, certainly not a social liberal of Revel's kind.

Then again, Revel's hatred for the West's past may have less to do with being blind to modernity than being partial to the view of it taken by neoconservatives. This at least would account for the publicity surrounding him. Reading such people as Irving Kristol, one has the definite impression that neoconservatism, far from being a return to the West's Christian past, consists of a sort of double entendre approval of liberalism. Leaving aside its moralistic tinge, the policy Kristol advocates is three-sided: 1.) large corporations are somewhat better equipped than small firms to provide "security, finely calibrated opportunities for achievement, fringe benefits, and paternalism"; 2.) their efficiency must be enhanced by making the whole world their field of operation, which consequently requires the lowering of national barriers; 3.) it is thought politically rewarding to pursue this goal under the guise of spreading democracy and freedom, as the new mission of America. Now doesn't Revel's social liberalism without borders bear a striking resemblance to this program? Might he be, after all, a mere mercenary? ■

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Shattered Society

Continued from page 10

nuclear family the possibility of a civic and extended one.

In Britain, there's a part of Birmingham called Castle Vale that has had no government money. But they drove from their streets the drug dealers, the prostitutes, the criminals. They took complete control of their area purely through social capital and self-organization, and all the indices of crime and violence dropped to rates unseen by any sort of state action. By having that social capital, they were able to capture political and economic power.

This is the essence of the Western liberal tradition: the rise of association—a state that isn't dictated by the oligopolies of the market and the central government. The task of a radical conservative politics is to recover this: the middle life of civil society. Villages should run villages, cities cities, and neighborhoods their own streets and parks. Additionally and most importantly, a transformative conservatism must take on the rampant individualism of the self-serving libertarian, not least because an individualism that undermines all social goods by denying a virtue-binding code and moral belief is not a conservative philosophy. On the contrary, extreme individualism is a leftist construct and should be recognized and abandoned as such.

The future is there to be gained. It is the politics of the middle, the life of the civic, and the empowerment of the ordinary. It is to be hoped that a radical conservatism embraces this opportunity and creates and facilitates this future for us all: free association and a self-organizing citizenry producing the norms and the universals that alone license a civic state, a plural society, and a participative economy. ■

Phillip Blond is director of ResPublica in London. This essay is partially adapted from a speech delivered at the Tocqueville Forum at Georgetown University.

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Song of the South

Collin Wilcox died last October, just as I was about to settle in for an annual viewing of “To Kill a Mockingbird.” Wilcox was the North Carolina actress whose

surly white-trash ejaculation Gregory Peckwards—“A chiffarobe!”—is one of several lines from the movie that have entered our family lexicon. (It’s just ahead of “He’s gone and drowned his dinner in sirrup” and behind “You wrong, man—you *dade* wrong.”)

I don’t think any American is permitted to exit teenagerhood without visiting the “tired old town” of Maycomb. My daughter’s tenth-grade class has gotten around to Harper Lee’s novel, though she and I read it together a couple of years ago, for in my own high-school days I dodged the Mockingbird draft, lighting out instead for the era’s Kurt Vonnegut-Richard Brautigan territory.

An uprooted Southerner once told me that *TKAM* was the Southern novel for people who hate the South, but I don’t think so. The racial injustice done Tom Robinson disfigures Maycomb, but it doesn’t define Lee’s town. Besides, the harshest criticisms of any place come from those who truly love and belong to it. For American examples, see Gore Vidal, Edmund Wilson, William Appleman Williams, Sinclair Lewis, and Edward Abbey.

Harper Lee, who turned 84 on April 28, still resides in her hometown of Monroeville, Alabama, an act that says everything that needs to be said about her loyalty to her place. A mutual friend tells me that she is a witty lady with a generous streak and a fondness for Christian charities.

What struck me about the novel was young Scout’s love of her father, the

noble lawyer Atticus, and that father’s love of his town. In one of the book’s loveliest lines—not uttered in the film, alas—Atticus asks Scout to “remember this, no matter how bitter things get, they’re still our friends and this is still our home.” There is a world of meaning in that sentence.

Lee told the story of Atticus Finch and Tom Robinson and the recluse Boo Radley not to damn her people but to commemorate them. She confessed her desire to “chronicle something that seems to be very quickly going down the drain. This is small-town middle-class southern life as opposed to the Gothic, as opposed to *Tobacco Road*, as opposed to plantation life.”

“As you know,” said Lee in the early 1960s, “the South is still made up of thousands of tiny towns. There is a very definite social pattern in these towns that fascinates me. I think it is a rich social pattern. I would simply like to put down all I know about this because I believe that there is something universal in this little world, something decent to be said for it, and something to lament in its passing.”

Late as we are in the American derangement—or are we early in its salutary realignment?—this cherishing of the small-town South, even while acknowledging historic cruelties, is all to the good.

I must have seen the movie 20 times, and spare me your sneering about arrested middlebrowism. Was there ever a more startling film debut than Robert

Duvall’s turn as Boo Radley? Has there been a better children’s ensemble than Alabama actors Philip Alford and Mary Badham and Connie Stevens’s half-brother(!) John Megna as Dill, little Truman Capote? (Megna went on to chant “bonk bonk on the head” in a famous “Star Trek” episode.) Ever hear the word “chiffarobe” used in another film?

The occasional cringe-inducing moments of liberal fantasy—as when the black citizenry, packing the segregated courtroom balcony, stands as one when Atticus passes by—I chalk up, perhaps unfairly, to the vanity of Gregory Peck, who, as Charles J. Shields revealed in his 2006 Harper Lee biography *Mockingbird*, complained at divaish length that his character didn’t have enough screen time. Peck’s sanctimony works very well in the film, however; it infuses, rather than embalms, Atticus Finch. Thank the casting gods that Universal’s first choice—Rock Hudson—didn’t get the part.

I don’t suppose I’ll ever read the book again, but many elements of the movie repay repeated exposure, from Elmer Bernstein’s superb score to Horton Foote’s screenplay, a model of concision and concinnity from which extraneous characters in the novel (such as annoying Aunt Alexandra) are wisely excised. And the supporting performances are magnificent. James Anderson, who played the malevolent Bob Ewell, was a drunken Alabama-born method actor so lost inside his part that he came to hate Gregory Peck.

For all this we can thank the tomboy who worshipped her father and aspired to be “the Jane Austen of south Alabama.” Happy birthday, Nelle Harper Lee. ■

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